

Sociability in the Writings of  
William Godwin, with Special Reference to  
Thomas Holcroft

By  
Emma Povall  
February 2019

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of De Montfort  
University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy



<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5-31</b>
<b>Chapter One:</b>	<b>Literary and Social Context 32-54</b>
<b>Chapter Two:</b>	<b>Practical Experience and Small and Friendly Gatherings 55-89</b>
<b>Chapter Three:</b>	<b>Friendship in Principle, Person, and Word, and the Influence of Thomas Holcroft 90-141</b>
<b>Chapter Four:</b>	<b>Rectifying “Inattention to the Principle, that Feeling, not Judgement, is the Source of Human Actions” 142-204</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>205-11</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>212-24</b>

## **Abstract**

William Godwin was a religious dissenter, political journalist, novelist, and author of the philosophical treatise *Political Justice*. The principal aim of my thesis is to provide a distinctive investigation of Godwin's theory of sociability, and to consider its development and practical and literary dissemination. Investigating key influences, I will show his intimate friend, the actor, novelist, and playwright Thomas Holcroft, as having a crucial role in shaping Godwin's whole model of sociability and intellectual exchange. Examining a selection of Godwin's and Holcroft's political writings, letters, diaries, early narratives, and novels reveals how each writer was acutely aware of differing types of genre and audience, and establishes how, at a time of political repression, they practised a politicised model of friendship at the very moment government sought to undermine it. Godwin used his model to develop an idea of essential equality: he sought to engage all of mankind in politically inflected friendship in order to achieve moral equality. Working as a virtual and practical partnership, Godwin and Holcroft shared a belief in the written word as a powerful vehicle of influence and modelled friendship in their writings so as to advance social and political reform.

## **Acknowledgements**

Sincere thanks go to my supervisor Tim Fulford whose consistent support, encouragement and patience have helped to see this thesis through to submission. Heartfelt thanks also go to my supervisor Felicity James whose warmth, help and encouragement have motivated me and ensured that I keep going. I am deeply indebted to you both for your unceasing generosity, your insight, and for all that you have taught me.

I am also grateful to Joe Phelan for forming part of my supervision team and to Phil Cox for his support in the beginning.

Without the backing of Midlands Four Cities-AHRC and De Montfort University this work would not have come to fruition, thank you all.

Personal thanks to Michael Bradshaw, Friends of Coleridge and Southey, and also to friends and peers in Midlands Four Cities, the White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership, BARS Early Careers and Postgraduates, my nephew Haig Smith, and friend Ian Reynolds: all of whom have encouraged, shared in and understood the highs and lows of my PhD journey.

A special mention to the Admissions team at Edge Hill University, my work colleagues and friends, you have made me laugh and aided the final stages of this process – thank you. Also, to Maggie for your friendship and practical help when the boys were a little younger.

The love and support of my family carries me: my mum, (my dad, sadly departed, but loved and never forgotten), my sister Sally and brother-in-law Alastair, Haig, Georgina, Aparna, Mark, my brother Barry, Jenny, Wilf, and Primrose, I thank you all. Finally, to my sons Josh and Toby you are my everything, a love that knows no bounds, thank you for putting up with the best and worst of this endeavour, I dedicate this work to you.

## Abbreviations

CW	William Godwin, <i>Caleb Williams</i> (1794), ed. by Pamela Clemit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
GD	William Godwin, <i>The Diary of William Godwin</i> , ed. by Victoria Myers, David O'Shaughnessy, and Mark Philp (Oxford: 2010), < <a href="http://www.godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/reading/index-disc.html">http://www.godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/reading/index-disc.html</a> >
GL	<i>The Letters of William Godwin</i> , ed. by Pamela Clemit, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 2014)
PJ	William Godwin, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice</i> (1794), ed. by Mark Philp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)
PPW	William Godwin, <i>Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin</i> , gen ed. Mark Philp, 7 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1993)

## Introduction

The principal aim of my thesis is to provide a distinctive investigation of Godwin's theory of sociability, and to consider its development and practical and literary dissemination. Concentrating on the formative period 1773-1805, my thesis deals with Godwin's thought up to the publication of *Fleetwood*. Friendship for Godwin was more important than has hitherto been argued: even though Godwinian friendship was set out by Godwin in an early, undated manuscript 'Notes on Friendship', in sections of *Political Justice* (1793, 1796, 1798) and in a later essay entitled 'Of Love and Friendship' (1831) there is no existing study dedicated solely to his theory.<sup>1</sup> Mark Philp has acknowledged the importance of Godwin's 'daily experience in the social and intellectual circles in which he moved.' He further notes that 'sociability was central to the social world of the intellectual and professional urban middle-classes of the late eighteenth century.'<sup>2</sup> That Philp does not trace the theory set out by Godwin is all the more apparent. David O'Shaughnessy has examined the importance of 'Godwin's association with theatre', and although he emphasises the significance of this particular mode of sociability and its importance amongst Godwin's circles, his study also does not outline Godwin's sociable theory.<sup>3</sup> Jon Mee has examined the importance of conversation in Godwin's principles of sociability. Godwin's method of read, reflect, converse highlights conversation as necessary for

---

<sup>1</sup> Although the manuscript is undated, Godwin writes that friendship 'is perhaps next to the most invaluable jewel the Almighty has placed within the reach of mortals'. The manuscript is therefore recognisable as an early piece when Godwin still identified with his Christian beliefs and was most likely written during his dissenting academy training. William Godwin, 'Notes on Friendship,' Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger c. 36, fols. 40-4; *PJ*; *Thoughts on Man*, 'Essay XV Of Love and Friendship' in, *PPW* VI. A. C. Grayling includes Godwin in his study on friendship throughout the ages, but he only examines his later essay 'Of Love and Friendship'. A. C. Grayling, *Friendship* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 106-11.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Philp. *Godwin's Political Justice* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1986), p. 214.

<sup>3</sup> David O'Shaughnessy, *William Godwin and the Theatre* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2010), p. 14.

individual advancement (*PJ*, 118). Mee portrays the sociable Godwin and notes that he does ‘not want to reproduce the knee-jerk casting of Godwin as an automaton with no social skills found in much Romantic literary criticism.’<sup>4</sup> He does also note, however, that due to his preference for smaller gatherings ‘Godwin was a sociable animal but within limits.’<sup>5</sup> Mee traces Godwin’s experience and ideal from open conversation in the early-1790s, to polite conversation brought about by the climate of spying and surveillance in the mid-1790s, to a paranoid, claustrophobic post-1795 conversable world where Pitt’s government sought to constrict freedom of speech. He recognises that even in the domestic situation of Godwin, Wollstonecraft and their friend Hays, ‘numerous satirical representations of their conversations in the anti-Jacobin novels that flooded the press,’ intruded upon intimate space.<sup>6</sup> If Mee’s study emphasises the importance to Godwin of conversation, the recent publication of Godwin’s letters helps chart his circles of notable acquaintance (*GL*). ‘Friendship forms the subject of many of the letters as Godwin gains, loses, and strives to maintain friends, and disciples, old and new.’<sup>7</sup> It is therefore timely that my thesis illuminates the significance of Godwinian friendship.

Godwin attended Hoxton Dissenting Academy during the years 1773-8, but remained relatively obscure until the publication of his treatise *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (1793) made him one of London’s most famous men of letters. He would achieve wider literary acclaim for his novels: *Things As They Are; or The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) is his most celebrated work, but *St Leon, A Tale of*

---

<sup>4</sup> Jon Mee, *Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention and Community 1762-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 144.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 148.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 166.

<sup>7</sup> Emma Povall, 'Emma Povall reads *The Letters of William Godwin, Volume II: 1798-1805* (Oxford University Press, 2015) ed. by Pamela Clemit,' *The Coleridge Bulletin*, 48 (2016), 113-7 (p. 113).



*the Sixteenth Century* (1799) and *Fleetwood: or the New Man of Feeling* (1805) also helped to accredit him as a successful novelist. Godwin was a prolific writer and he also composed a number of well received essays, pamphlets, biographies and children's books. Although his plays were less successful, his generic range is no less impressive. As O'Shaughnessy has noted: 'Hazlitt's assessment that Godwin "blazed as a sun in the firmament of reputation" and that "no one was more talked of, more looked up to, more sought after" is often cited but perhaps not adequately recognized in literary criticism.'<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the significance of his theory of sociability has also been overlooked.

### **Godwinian Friendship**

Godwin's early interest in friendship was formed at dissenting academies where the 'textual culture' of free enquiry and the access to rational dissenting networks all helped to inspire the composition of his early manuscript 'Notes on Friendship'. Dissenters felt their exclusion deeply, owing to their resolution not to conform, and academies enabled them to form crucial bonds with other like-minded non-conformists whilst, crucially, training the next generation to carry on their religious tradition. Part of the vision of the academies was to employ friendship, which incorporated collaborative literary production, to disseminate texts containing vital truths that engaged in national and international debates more widely: Tessa Whitehouse defines this as their 'textual culture'.<sup>9</sup> The evident 'textual culture' of the academies and the aim to disseminate vital truths more widely, together with the reliance on friendship evident in such processes, must in part have induced Godwin to write his manuscript.

---

<sup>8</sup> O'Shaughnessy, *William Godwin and the Theatre*, p. 1, quoting Hazlitt, 'William Godwin'.

<sup>9</sup> Tessa Whitehouse, *The Textual Culture of English Protestant Dissent 1720-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 5.

There were multiple connections and overlapping relationships that existed between dissenting academy men and women and Godwin was closely connected to Philip Doddridge, whose *Course of Lectures on the Principal Subjects in Pneumatology, Ethics and Divinity* (1763) was the fundamental text at most academies. Godwin's grandfather was an intimate friend of Doddridge's, and his father had been Doddridge's pupil at Northampton Academy.<sup>10</sup> Although Godwin's connections were strong, he struggled with his peers at Hoxton, due to overexertion in exercising his right to 'free enquiry,' by his intense questioning. However, he was fortunate enough to form a close friendship with one peer, James Marshall, and with his academy tutor Andrew Kippis. The closeness of his friendships with Marshall and Kippis and his struggle to form bonds with others of his peers, may also have driven Godwin to consider the importance of friendship.

Godwin uses his manuscript to establish the significance of friendship and the classically inspired principle that 'society depends upon friendship'.<sup>11</sup> He writes 'man was not made for himself alone. Solitude deprives us, not only of the conveniences and elegancies, but likewise many the noblest enjoyments of human life. Among the foremost of these is friendship, an acquisition, the pleasure of which is only equalled by it's [sic] utility.'<sup>12</sup> Early on, Godwin recognises the usefulness of a friend and the happiness to be found in either seeking to serve, or receiving help from a friend. He notes how 'naturally inclined to communication our joys in prosperity and success are increased by sharing them with another, and the consciousness of

---

<sup>10</sup> See Peter H. Marshall, *William Godwin* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1295b23-5, quoted in, A. C. Grayling, *Friendship*: A. C. Grayling writes: 'Convergence in attitudes and aims of the kind that keeps cities together "seems to be similar, in a way, to friendship", [Aristotle] says, which is why political action is aimed at achieving it. This was no idle remark. The *Nicomachean Ethics* precedes the *Politics* for good reason. "Society depends upon friendship."' p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> 'Notes on Friendship,' MS Abinger, c. 36, fols. 40-4.

contributing to the felicity of one whom we greatly esteem.’<sup>13</sup> Godwin establishes that a friend must be one whom we can esteem. At the start of his manuscript he questions ‘which are the requisites to true friendship? They are nobleness of spirit, good-nature, good-sense, virtue and docility. Without these no useful, no intimate friendship can subsist.’<sup>14</sup> He further notes how qualities such as ‘good judgement and sense’ are of estimable worth and inspire trust and help to establish essential equality in friendship:

Yet more friendship is a sort of antidote to the infirmities of our nature — Mixed in the busy scenes of life, we frequently want both time and temper, sufficient to enable us duly to consider our own situation. In such a case what can be more salutary than the advice of a friend? One who cannot but be well acquainted with our disposition and circumstances, and who is in some measure a disinterested spectator of our conduct. And as we must be supported to place an unlimited confidence in his judgement and good sense, we shall certainly receive his advice with impartiality, and weigh it with candour. Thus shall we be withheld from every rash processing, and enabled to act with a wisdom to which no single person could ever attain.<sup>15</sup>

Godwin shows how friendship enhances the individual. To recognise and feel the intimacy of a close and trusted friend, is to accept metaphorically that a healthy line also exists where concern reaches disinterestedness. To truly assist a friend is to listen as one who is detached from any emotional entanglement, ‘a disinterested spectator’, so that the soundest, least prejudiced advice may be given. Equally, such disinterested advice can then be weighed, and

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

considered by the receiver with the same measure of ‘impartiality’, the result being that the risk of any ‘rash’ outcome has been reasoned away two-fold. Importantly, however, the conclusion or outcome reached will ultimately remain that of the individual. The friend who is the party seeking consultation accepts themselves to be in a lowlier position, the superiority of their friend being evident in their role as mentor or advisor; however, the advice once given is taken, and subsequent individual reflection and reason raise the receiver to the status of equal. The implication is that such progress not only assists the individual, but society in general, as individual growth and reason crosses into broader practical politics through the positive social experience of close friendship. As stated at the outset, ‘Society depends on friendship’.<sup>16</sup> Godwin demonstrates exactly how friendship is a place in which to expose flaws, so that whilst a friend has traits of estimable worth, ‘I’ and they also exude their faults. Significantly, to act as a disinterested friend is to consciously remove oneself from emotional entanglement in order to act benevolently and for both the individual and greater good. However, this is not to deny affection felt in friendship: in fact, affection is necessary to be able to consider the faults of a friend and equally to convey them back to him. Godwin acknowledges that a friend is someone ‘whom we confide in and love.’<sup>17</sup>

### ***Political Justice, Sociability and Friendship***

When Godwin came to write his treatise, he had moved away from the academy period of his life and had gained the experience necessary to more fully consider modes of sociability and to write these into his

---

<sup>16</sup> Mary Fairclough recognises Godwin’s ‘analysis of the significance of communication for the development of individual reason and the progress of society’ in, *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy and Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 93.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Notes on Friendship,’ MS Abinger, c. 36, fols. 40-4.

developing theory. Godwin had become part of the wider rational dissenting community and he enjoyed the dinners held by publishers George Robinson and Joseph Johnson. He also enjoyed the sociability found in attending booksellers' shops and tea parties. Although Godwin's interests had transferred from religious, to political matters, dissenting influence remained strong and is evident in *Political Justice* when Godwin states that 'the grand instrument for forwarding the improvement of mind is the publication of truth' (*PJ*, 105). The academy premise of disseminating texts containing vital truths that engaged in national and international debates more widely had been transferred into Godwin's quest for political justice. So, too, had the principle of free enquiry: 'it follows that the promising of the best interests of mankind eminently depends upon the freedom of social communication' (*PJ*, 118). Inspired by the modes of sociability he had come to value, Godwin writes, 'Time, reading and conversation are necessary to render them familiar' and continues that there must be time for 'reading and reflection' before 'proceed[ing] afterwards in candid and unreserved conversation' (*PJ*, 115 and 118). Godwin had set out his method of read, reflect, converse and he uses *Political Justice* to demonstrate how this should be practised, both one to one in intimate friendship, and in small circles.

Godwin had and continued to have the close friendship of Marshall and Kippis, but his circles of acquaintance were widening to include notable others, most significantly his intimate friend Thomas Holcroft. Inspired by the candour exercised by rational dissenters, Godwin and Holcroft developed their shared principle of frank and unreserved conversation. In *Political Justice*, Godwin writes 'discussion perhaps never exists with so much vigour and utility as in the conversation of two persons. It may be carried on with advantage in small and friendly societies' (*PJ*, 119). Godwin was confident that a time would come when 'such institutions will be universal', so that

one small gathering led to another small gathering and so on, ensuring that political justice eventually reached all (*PJ*, 119).

Still drawing on classic examples studied whilst at Hoxton Academy and afterwards individually, Godwin was better situated to consider theory and practice.<sup>18</sup> In *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle observes how political action promotes the coming together of beliefs in order to keep townships together. Aristotle writes:

Now all forms of community are like parts of the political community; for men journey together with a view to some particular advantage, and to provide something that they need for the purposes of life; and it is for the sake of advantage that the political community too seems to have come together originally and to endure, for this is what legislators aim at, and they call just that which is to the common advantage.<sup>19</sup>

This sense of community feeds into Godwin's concept of small circles of sociability, where men and women meet to discuss and to learn, in order to obtain knowledge and the general advantage of political justice. Godwin sought to progress away from existing and 'early Hanoverian modes of politeness and sociability [where] politics and sociability do not go hand in hand.'<sup>20</sup>

In his treatise 'On Friendship', Cicero recalls a particular occasion on which the politician Scaevola 'was sitting on a semi-circular garden-bench, as was his custom, when I and a very few

---

<sup>18</sup> Marshall notes: 'In his lectures, Kippis offered an accurate survey of the works of Aristotle, Cicero, Xenophon, and Plato, and warmly recommended the ancient historians.' Marshall continues, 'Godwin never lost his enthusiasm for ancient literature and for the greater part of his life spent at least one hour reading some Greek and one hour reading some Latin every day. He warmly recommended the study of the classics to the young and later wrote for them some lively histories of Greece and Rome.' *William Godwin*, p. 37.

<sup>19</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, transl. by David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 154.

<sup>20</sup> Quoting Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite, eds. 'Introducing Romantic Sociability' in *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1-23 (pp. 6-7).

intimate friends were there, and he chanced to turn the conversation upon a subject which about that time was in many people's mouths [...] Scaevola detailed to us a discourse of Laelius on friendship delivered to himself and Laelius's other son-in-law Galus Fannius.'<sup>21</sup> Drawing on Cicero, Godwin could envisage how circles of friends could gather together to enquire and to learn, taking time to prepare, before branching out into the community more broadly to replicate small circles of sociability where make-up was different, but purpose remained the same.

Godwin and Holcroft both harboured misgivings about large gatherings which could become hard to control and more akin to a mob, rather than a meeting of sober, enquiring minds. Godwin uses *Political Justice* as a warning against unruly gatherings and to promote small and friendly gatherings:

Associations must be formed with great caution not to be allied to tumult. The conviviality of a feast may lead to the depredations of a riot. While the sympathy of opinion catches from man to man, especially in numerous meetings, and among persons whose passions have not been used to the curb of judgment, actions may be determined on, which solitary reflection would have rejected. There is nothing more barbarous, cruel and blood-thirsty, than the triumph of the mob. Sober thought should always prepare the way to the public assertion of truth (*PJ*, 115).

The first edition of *Political Justice* more forcefully argues that only the perception of truth is needed to motivate our adherence to moral

---

<sup>21</sup> M. Tullius Cicero, *Laelius: A Dialogue on Friendship*, transl. by Henry Clark Johnson and Evelyn S. Shuckburgh (New York: London: Macmillan and Co., 1894), p. 5.

principles. However, evident tension, in the first edition, between the power of truth and that of feeling had been noted by Godwin and Holcroft.<sup>22</sup> Influenced by Holcroft, Godwin was inspired to produce revisions to *Political Justice* that stress the value of feeling.

### **Early Recognition of Affection in Friendship and Flaws Concerning the Value of Feeling in *Political Justice***

There is evident tension in the first edition of *Political Justice* between the power of truth and that of feeling. As has been noted, the quest for truth formed an intrinsic part of Godwin's dissenting academy training. However, also influenced by his academy training, Godwin had, from his earliest writings, recognised the value of friendship. Close reading of the first edition of *Political Justice* reveals how the capacity to feel is essential to intimate friendship, and this is also shown in Godwin's early manuscript 'Notes on Friendship.' In *Political Justice* Godwin writes:

He that knows the mind of man, must have observed it for himself; he that knows it most intimately, must have observed it in its greatest variety of situations. He must have seen it without disguise, when no exterior situation puts a curb on its passions, and induces the individual to exhibit a studied, not a spontaneous character. He must have seen men in their unguarded moments, when the eagerness of temporary resentment tips their tongue with fire, when they are animated and dilated by hope, when they are tortured and anatomised by

---

<sup>22</sup> Godwin recognised his haste to publish had meant there were errors in the first edition, including the mishandling of feeling. See William Godwin, *The Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, vol. I, ed. by Mark Philp (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 54. Also see Chapter 4 of this thesis and its discussion of Holcroft's influence in revising *Political Justice*.



despair, when the soul pours out its inmost self into the bosom of an equal and a friend. Lastly, he must himself have been an actor in the scene, have had his own passions brought into play, have known the anxiety of expectation and the transport of success, or he will feel and understand about as much of what he sees, as mankind in general would of the transactions of the vitriolised inhabitants of the planet Mercury, or the salamanders that live in the sun. — Such is the education of the true philosopher, the genuine politician, the friend and benefactor of human kind (*PJ*, 209).

This section is taken from a chapter in ‘Book V’ entitled ‘Of Education, The Education of a Prince’: friendship is thus clearly identified as being of importance in the formation of a ruler. Godwin may be writing of the education of a prince, but his passage speaks of the necessary education of all mankind and friendship is a vital part of that process. Significantly, in later editions of *Political Justice*, only a couple of words are altered: Godwin changes the rather clinical ‘anatomised by despair’ for the more feeling ‘wrung with despair’ in the third edition, whilst the arrangement of Book V remains the same in each edition.<sup>23</sup> The important role of friendship does not change. Whether prince or pauper, friendship crosses divides and enables ‘human kind’ to be viewed in all its forms: ‘he that knows the mind of man, must have observed it for himself; he that knows it most intimately, must have observed it in its greatest variety of situations. He must have seen it without disguise, when no exterior situation puts a curb on its passions, and induces the individual to exhibit a studied, not a spontaneous character’ (*PJ*, 209). Essential equality in

---

<sup>23</sup> Godwin also changes ‘vitriolised’ for ‘vitrified’ in the second and third editions, see *PPW* IV, 225. Also, *PPW* IV, 9 where Philp has drawn a table that ‘compares the order of chapters in the 1798 edition with the arrangement in the 1793 edition.’ Book V remains the ‘same’; also see William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, ed. by Isaac Kramnick, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (1798), pp. 414-5.

Godwinian friendship cancels out inequality, so that differences in class, education, and experience are seen to aid progress. When knowledge has been shared, and advice on a particular subject has been given, subsequent reflection raises the receiver to status of equal, so that regardless of rank or status there is recognition of the moral equality of mankind. To see, and want for others as for ourselves, is to feel and therefore become ‘the friend and benefactor of mankind’ (*PJ*, 209). This section from *Political Justice* demonstrates how society depends on friendship, but not the artificial friendship of the court and polite society, rather, the frank and unreserved friendship of Godwin’s early manuscript ‘Notes on Friendship.’<sup>24</sup>

Consistencies between this passage from *Political Justice* and Godwin’s manuscript ‘Notes on Friendship’ are striking. In his manuscript, Godwin writes:

Man was not made for himself alone. Solitude deprives us, not only of the conveniences and elegancies, but likewise of many the noblest enjoyments of human life. Among the foremost of these is friendship: an acquisition, the pleasure of which is only equalled by its utility. By it our happiness is doubled, and our miseries are divided – Naturally inclined to communication, our joys in prosperity and success are increased, by sharing them with another, and the consciousness of contributing to the felicity of one whom we greatly esteem. In like manner, when our breasts heave with heart-felt sorrow, it alleviates our griefs to fly to one whom we confide in and love, disclose our secret soul and unburden our bursting heart.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> ‘Notes on Friendship,’ MS Abinger, c. 36, fols. 40-4.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

Trust that comes from intimate friendship allows us to witness fellow ‘human kind’ ‘in their unguarded moments,’ when emotions lead and uninhibited feelings are conveyed. Friendship, therefore, assists ‘human kind’: flying ‘to one whom we confide in and love’ — ‘exhibiting spontaneous character’ — enables us to experience the best and worst of human nature, encourages individual reflection and aids growth.<sup>26</sup> Lack of human interaction deprives the individual of happiness. If left in a state of solitude, without the ability to share, an individual cannot progress: he or she cannot assist in the advancement of society because ‘he [she] will feel and understand about as much of what he [she] sees, as mankind in general would of the transactions of the vitriolised inhabitants of the planet Mercury’ (*PJ*, 209). Whether prince, pauper, or anywhere in between, these passages from *Political Justice* and ‘Notes on Friendship’ reveal that feeling, and particularly the kind of feeling that forms an essential part of intimate friendship, is necessary to develop moral reasoning.

Notably, however, the first edition of *Political Justice* more starkly argues that only the perception of truth is needed to motivate our adherence to moral principles: ‘truth, immortal and ever present truth, is so powerful, that, in spite of all his inveterate prejudices, the upright man will suspect himself, when he resolves upon an action that is at war with the plainest principles of morality’ (*PJ*, 130). Dissenting academies took great satisfaction in their freedom to educate, and their emphasis on open discussion, debate, and rational enquiry, which were viewed as essential in the search for truth. Such influence is more powerfully conveyed in Godwin’s original *Political Justice*, but both Godwin and Holcroft felt a pressing need for *Political Justice* to be revised, to iron out inconsistencies and to incorporate the value of feeling more fully. As Philp observes, in the second and third editions of *Political Justice* ‘sentiment and feeling

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid; *PJ*, 209.

are given a much more powerful role, no longer to be expunged by the power of truth; the private affections are allowed to play a part in moral reasoning; and a more consistently utilitarian language is deployed throughout the work.’<sup>27</sup>

### **‘Of Love and Friendship’ (1831)**

By the time Godwin came to write his late essay, he had the value of experience from his friendship with Holcroft and from his relationship with Mary Wollstonecraft and his second wife Mary Jane Clairmont. Godwin’s later essay is a work of two parts, and the first part may be seen as testament to the enduring effect of Wollstonecraft. Godwin writes affectionately of the bond between parent and child, so that the domestic affections evident in the person of Wollstonecraft (and which Godwin would come to write so tenderly into the *Memoirs*), are more fully realised by himself.<sup>28</sup>

Firstly, Godwin defines a ‘passion of the mind’ in order that passion may be met with reason, but he also incorporates a place for imagination (*PPW* VI, 187). It is impossible to read Godwin’s words without calling to mind his love for Wollstonecraft. The letters between them show how Godwin was developing his idea of a ‘passion of the mind’ in order that passion met with reason. In ‘Of Love and Friendship’ he goes on to note that ‘the great model of the affection of love in human beings, is the sentiment which subsists between parents and children’ (*PPW* VI, 187). The love that develops for a child, even before it is born, cannot be fully ‘understood, measured, or reduced to rule’, but reason comes by remembering what has been, for example, the love felt for the partner with whom the

---

<sup>27</sup> Philp. ‘William Godwin’ in, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/godwin>>.

<sup>28</sup> Godwin writes that Wollstonecraft ‘was a worshipper of domestic life. She loved to observe the growth of affection between me and her daughter, then three years of age, as well as my anxiety respecting the child not yet born.’ *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London: J. Johnson, 1798), p. 171.

child has been conceived and the future hopes each parent holds for the child that will be (*PPW VI*, 187).

Godwin goes on to note ‘the conscious feeling of the protector and protected’ and how the love between parent and child is ‘to affect and be affected’ (*PPW VI*, 188). He writes ‘but if the infant that is near to me lays hold of my imagination and affections at the moment in which he falls under my observation, how much more do I become interested in him, as he advances from year to year! [...] But, as his powers expand, I understand him better’ (*PPW VI*, 189). As it once was for Godwin and Wollstonecraft the feelings they developed emerged from behind ‘a mystery and a veil,’ but left ‘the mind to fill up according to its pleasure and in the best manner it is able’, so it is with the love between parent and child, ‘the most perfect tie of affection’ (*PPW VI*, 187). That which begins beyond understanding, reaches reason in acknowledging the relationship’s worth.

In the second part of his essay Godwin turns to ‘the ancients’ who ‘seem to have conceived the truest and most exalted ideas on the subject of friendship’ (*PPW VI*, 193).<sup>29</sup> Godwin refers to certain ancient models of friendship including Homer’s Achilles and Patroclus, and Cicero’s Scipio and Laelius, where there is inequality in status and position. Godwin does this to return to essential equality, which moves away from any worldly pressures of status and inequality, first laid out in his early manuscript ‘Notes on Friendship’ and carried through to *Political Justice* in the ‘Education of a Prince’ (*PJ*, 209).<sup>30</sup> ‘The great man’, such as Achilles or Scipio, having had ‘enough of his greatness, when he stands before the world [...] is anxious to throw aside this incumbrance, and be as a man merely to a man’ (*PPW VI*, 194). Although Patroclus was in a servitor’s role, and Laelius was a loyal second-in-command, both Patroclus and Laelius

---

<sup>29</sup> See also p. 192.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Notes on Friendship,’ MS Abinger, c. 36, fols. 40-4.

were able to realise the qualities of their superior, but they were also able to move far beyond status to ‘discuss, to share attitudes and feelings about things’, and there was trust and confidence between them. Godwin notes that what the ‘great man [...] seeks for, is a true friend, a being who sincerely loves, one who is attached to him, not for the accidents that attend him, but for what most strictly belongs to him, and of which he cannot be divested. In this friend there is neither interested intention nor rivalry’ (*PPW* VI, 194). In 1831, Godwin has gone full cycle back to his manuscript ‘Notes on Friendship’ to demonstrate the importance of disinterestedness in friendship, and to highlight how inequality meets essential equality in friendship in one ‘whom we can confide in and love.’<sup>31</sup> Society and political justice depend upon friendship.

### **The Importance of Holcroft**

When studying Godwin the name of Holcroft appears consistently: so that it is difficult to consider one without investigating the other. How Godwin and Holcroft valued their friendship, the length and depth of their relationship, has inspired this study. Recently, interest in Holcroft has grown as the publication of the standard volumes of his works, and Miriam L. Wallace and A. A. Markley’s edited volume of essays, demonstrates.<sup>32</sup> Holcroft’s place is significant, not least because we need to understand how Godwin’s friendship with him was influenced by rational dissent and its academies, but also to better determine what Holcroft’s sociable model, that of a lapsed dissenter, offered Godwin. My thesis adds insight into the thought-processes,

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Holcroft, *The Novels and Selected Plays of Thomas Holcroft*, gen eds. A. A. Markley and W. M. Verhoeven, 5 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007); Miriam L. Wallace and A. A. Markley eds. *Re-Viewing Thomas Holcroft 1745-1809: Essays on His Works and Life* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012); see also Eliza O’Brien, “‘The Greatest Appearance of Truth’: Telling Tales with Thomas Holcroft,” *Eighteenth Century Fiction*, 28.3 (2016), 501-26.

character, literary works and workings of this influential friend of Godwin.

Holcroft was eleven years older than Godwin and was an example of someone who was self-taught in both life-experience and learning: when he and Godwin met, they were both pursuing the same trade.<sup>33</sup> William St Clair notes how:

By 1788 Godwin and Holcroft were fast friends, seeing each other nearly every day. Holcroft had profound respect for Godwin's knowledge, for his vast reading, and for his clarity in argument — qualities which a self-taught shoemaker could not match. But if Godwin helped fill gaps in Holcroft, Holcroft knew things that book-learning could never supply. He had travelled all over England and visited abroad; he had consorted with an astonishing variety of men and women from the lowest labourer to the Prince Regent; he had known poverty and riches, humiliation and salutation.<sup>34</sup>

Godwin was able to enjoy the kind of intimate friendship he had written of in his early manuscript 'Notes on Friendship,' but could now experience fully, as he and Holcroft became 'fast friends.' From the earliest entries, Godwin's diary shows how Holcroft was a friend with whom Godwin consistently dined, supped, called, or was called upon. The diary is further evidence of how, from the offset, they critiqued one another's work, for example on 23 April 1788 Godwin simply records 'Holcroft calls. Send him corrections on Trenck.'<sup>35</sup> Crucially, Godwin and Holcroft actively discussed their own personal

---

<sup>33</sup> Early in life, Holcroft was a stable-boy at Newmarket where he devised a plan to educate himself. See Thomas Holcroft, *The Life of Thomas Holcroft: Written by Himself Continued to the Time of His Death from His Diary Notes and Other Papers by William Hazlitt and now Newly Edited with Introduction and Notes by Elbridge Colby in Two Volumes* (London: Constable and Company, 1925), pp. 52-6.

<sup>34</sup> St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 39.

<sup>35</sup> *The life of Frederic Trenck; containing his adventures; his cruel and excessive sufferings, during ten years imprisonment, at the fortress of Magdeburg, by command of the late king of Prussia; also, anecdotes, historical, political and personal. Translated from the German, by Thomas Holcroft.* (3 volumes) 1788, see *GD*.

beliefs and in the run up to *Political Justice*'s publication, Godwin's diary shows how he and Holcroft met frequently for tea, dinner, or supper and how principles were discussed and chapters of Godwin's philosophical treatise were subsequently rewritten: such was the importance of close friendship that enjoyed open, honest and shared enquiry.<sup>36</sup>

Both Godwin and Holcroft were wary of large gatherings and believed that small intellectual gatherings, that encouraged open discussion, were vital for individual progression.<sup>37</sup> They both believed that such modes of sociability were essential for happiness and provided time and a means of developing ideas and discourse that could ultimately be carried out in society for the betterment of all. In contrast to the small talk of polite gatherings, they sought to radicalise sociability by pursuing 'freedom of social communication' through frank and honest discourse (*PJ*, 118).

Godwin believed that men and women needed to time to prepare to learn the art of effective reflection and discourse, at small and friendly gatherings. Once ready, individuals would branch out and encourage the same method of enquiry in circles of sociability of their own formation. Intimate friendship was a place to retreat to, outside of such meetings, to be able to consider and share other viewpoints, or to reaffirm one's own. Godwin's diary demonstrates how he and Holcroft discussed key points and principles, but it also shows how frequently they supped together having visited others, and it does not seem unreasonable to surmise they would often utilise this time to discuss pressing matters of their day.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> See Chapter Two of this thesis and its discussion of Holcroft's involvement in the formulation of *Political Justice*.

<sup>37</sup> It is written in his *Memoirs*, how Holcroft 'constantly deprecated force, rashness, tumult, and popular violence. He was a friend to political and moral improvement, but he wished it to be gradual, calm, and rational, because he believed no other could be effectual.' p. 149.

<sup>38</sup> For example, on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1791 Godwin records: 'Holcroft sups, talk of Plato.' On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1790 Godwin notes: 'Dine at Hollis, with Kippis, Towers, Garbets and J Hollis. Inquest. Holcroft sups.' The editors note that Godwin refers to the 'Inquest



Godwin had developed a keen interest in theatre and his introduction to Holcroft, who was both actor and playwright, attracted his attention. Significantly, they met at a time when they were both experiencing strong religious doubt. Importantly, Holcroft's early narrative *Manthorn the Enthusiast* (1778-9) considers religious fanaticism, undesirable spouting clubs, and the cultural importance of theatre, so that Holcroft may be seen as developing his own sociable model. Early on, Holcroft marks the pursuit of happiness and pleasure as a vital component of political justice, to be found in the setting of theatre. He recognises theatre's potential for moral and political development for every layer of society in attendance.<sup>39</sup> Further than this, Holcroft was instrumental in demonstrating how politics could be conveyed through fiction in the forms of drama and the political novel.

## Methodology

In order to achieve my thesis's aims it will be necessary to examine historical context in order to show the contemporary meanings and functions of friendship in the public and especially political sphere. This thesis takes a New Historicist approach to Romanticism: texts are explored across a range of media in their social and political contexts. Recently, Tim Fulford has argued that 'Formalism benefits from historicism when the micro-historical, including the biographical, is combined with the study of the large scale.'<sup>40</sup> Through the analysis of 'the micro-historical, including the biographical,' the plan is to combine

---

following the death of Thomas Holcroft's estranged third wife, Dinah Robinson, on 31 October 1790.' Also, on 22nd February 1792: 'Call on Robinson, N[ew] A[nnual] R[egister].: on Webb, n[ot] a[t] h[ome]: on Canning, talk of pol. Philosophy & Holcroft: on Barry, talk of Paine, read on truth. Sup at Holcroft's.' On 12<sup>th</sup> February 1790 Godwin writes: 'Tea Miss Williams': with Holcroft, Swift, Aboyne: & mes Marriot, Bailey and Paisley: sup at Holcroft's.' *GD*.

<sup>39</sup> See Chapter Three of this thesis and its discussion of Holcroft and theatre.

<sup>40</sup> Tim Fulford, *Romantic Poetry and Literary Coteries: The Dialect of a Tribe* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 7.

elucidation of specific historical contexts together with analysis of form and genre. In his recent work, *Five Long Winters: The Trials of British Romanticism*, John Bugg acknowledges that literary form is a site of ‘historical registration and political engagement.’<sup>41</sup> He, like this study, argues for important consistencies in Godwin’s work and acknowledges that particular authors in the 1790s were compelled to deploy new and complex modes of writing due to the repression of free speech by government.

Critical discussion of Godwin has highlighted the importance of Dissent to the formulation of his political theory. Philp acknowledges that ‘given the extent of Dissenting influence in Godwin’s social circles, we have good reason to suggest that the parallels between Godwin’s thought and that of Rational Dissenters are more than coincidental.’<sup>42</sup> Whitehouse helps to inform our understanding of rational dissenting circles and their academies.<sup>43</sup> Notably, she examines the ‘textual culture’ of the academies highlighting the literary collaborations and workings amongst them and notes how there was a general understanding of academy principles amongst the wider community thanks greatly in part to print. This is also of particular significance when considering how Holcroft formed part of important rational dissenting networks. Felicity James’s and Ian Inkster’s work helps give greater insight into dissenting belief and the value placed on their academies.<sup>44</sup> James challenges the reader to consider dissenting connections and networks and how the Barbauld family operated as a family, but also how they were attached to other dissenting families and the academy ‘family.’ David L. Wykes’s informative chapter, ‘The Revd John Aikin senior: Kibworth School and Warrington Academy,’ highlights prominent dissenting connections and how tutors utilised

---

<sup>41</sup> John Bugg, *Five Long Winters: The Trials of British Romanticism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), p. 20.

<sup>42</sup> Philp, *Godwin’s Political Justice*, p. 37.

<sup>43</sup> Whitehouse, *Textual Culture*.

<sup>44</sup> Felicity James and Ian Inkster eds. *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld Circle 1740-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

friendship and encouraged and selected former pupils, or colleagues to establish new academies.<sup>45</sup>

Networks of rational dissent were vast, but the intellectual stimulus Godwin gained through its metropolitan branches proved invaluable and helped him to envisage a method whereby similar circles and sociability could be replicated. In order to understand their place in London at this time, Vic Gattrell helps to provide valuable insight into street level and underworld eighteenth century London, while John Brewer helps to gain comprehensive insight into the workings of eighteenth century society.<sup>46</sup>

Dinner parties signified a cross-over for Godwin as he gradually moved away from the academy period of his life. Firstly, I will consider how the dinner parties hosted by radical publishers George Robinson and Joseph Johnson kept Godwin and his close friend Holcroft within influential circles of rational dissent, but also helped to develop their belief in the benefits of meeting in small gatherings to focus more fully on moral and political truths. William West's *Recollections* focus on the dinners held by respected publisher George Robinson. He notes the familial setting of Robinson's home, and dinners which included his sons and their guests, that were attended by himself, Holcroft and Godwin.<sup>47</sup> Helen Braithwaite writes informatively of Johnson's dinner parties, and notes Godwin's and others of those in attendance.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> James, 'Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbault Circle, 1740-1860: An Introduction,' in James and Inkster, *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbault Circle 1740-1860*, 1-27; David L. Wykes, 'The Revd John Aikin Senior: Kibworth School and Warrington Academy,' in James and Inkster, *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbault Circle 1740-1860*, 28-49.

<sup>46</sup> Vic Gattrell, *The First Bohemians: Life and Art in London's Golden Age* (London: Penguin, 2014); John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997 [repr. 2013]).

<sup>47</sup> William West, *Fifty Years Recollections of an Old Bookseller* (London: Printed by and for the Author, 1837).

<sup>48</sup> Helen Braithwaite, *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent: Joseph Johnson and the Cause of Liberty* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

The letters of Mary Hays help to demonstrate how for both Godwin and Holcroft the tea party formed part of a course of debate and education that, having been stimulated by reading also involved writing — in the follow-up of letters — as well as conversation. Consequently, writing and reading, ‘philosophy’ or politics occurred out of and in a social setting, rather than solitude.<sup>49</sup> Certain of Hays’s correspondence to Godwin demonstrates how serious matters were the topic of discussion and the system of read, reflect, converse, in small circles, was practised at tea parties.

Markman Ellis is an important source concerning coffee-house sociability.<sup>50</sup> Of particular note are his findings concerning plebeian politics and how, in early eighteenth century London, the lower orders had established their own coffee-house network. This demonstrates how they used these lowly establishments to practice political oratory which was founded on ignorance. Godwin and Holcroft both harboured misgivings about coffee houses and examination of Ellis, Gattrell and Brewer help to distinguish how coffee-shop reputation fed in to their reserve.

Holcroft’s *Manthorn the Enthusiast* (1778) gives a strong sense of the man that Godwin would later meet.<sup>51</sup> Holcroft uses his early narrative to demonstrate the depth of his religious scepticism and progression towards atheism. As his protagonist Manthorn sheds religion he finds a spouting club. These clubs were attractive to tradesmen and others who met mostly in taverns, where participants read out extracts from their favourite plays and poems.<sup>52</sup> Notably,

---

<sup>49</sup> Mary Hays, *The Correspondence (1779-1843) of Mary Hays, British Novelist*, ed. by Marilyn L. Brooks (Ceredigion: Mellen, 2004).

<sup>50</sup> Markman Ellis, *The Coffee House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004).

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Holcroft, *The History of Manthorn, the Enthusiast* (1778-9), ed. by Rick Incorvati, *Early Novels, The Novels and Selected Plays of Thomas Holcroft*, vol. I.

<sup>52</sup> Gillian Russell notes that: ‘Spouting Clubs [were] venues in which apprentices, soldiers and sailors, clerks and tradesmen, could emulate Garrick or Kean by essaying speeches from Shakespeare.’ ‘Spouters or Washerwomen’, in Russell and Tuite, *Romantic Sociability*, 123-44 (p. 138).

Holcroft uses his early narrative to expose spouting clubs as an undesirable mode of sociability, so that in *Manthorn*, just as in life, Holcroft may be seen as developing his own sociable model. Holcroft developed a belief in theatre ‘as a site of moral instruction,’ and although *Manthorn* is incomplete he starts a process, the aim of which is to draw attention to theatre as an acceptable site of sociability.<sup>53</sup>

I will then consider how Holcroft was a crucial link for Godwin. Although Godwin envisaged a process that began with intellectual advantage, his consideration of how such a system could and would filter out into society more broadly has been given less consideration than it should. The influence of Holcroft combined with shared circles of sociability was significant: early on, Holcroft had become part of a small society called the ‘Cannonians’, which Godwin subsequently joined. The recent publication of William Nicholson Junior’s *Memoirs* of his father gives valuable insight into this close, influential friend of Godwin and Holcroft. Nicholson Junior discusses ‘the Cannonian’ that Holcroft and Nicholson were involved in, and Nicholson Junior notes Godwin’s involvement. The Cannonian is further proof of how theory developed from practice in Godwin’s *Political Justice*. Holcroft’s background, self-learning, and thirst for the education of the lower orders was great and is evident in the gradual introduction of small gatherings of Godwin’s model.

Holcroft was instrumental in demonstrating how politics could be conveyed through fiction in the forms of drama and the political novel. Inspired, Godwin sought to deliver a more overtly political novel form that moved away from Romance narratives, which Holcroft argued served ‘no other purpose than to amuse.’<sup>54</sup> Godwin

---

<sup>53</sup> Quoting O’Shaughnessy, ‘Introduction’ in, *The Plays of William Godwin*, ed. by David O’Shaughnessy (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2010), p. xv.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Holcroft, ‘Preface,’ *Alwyn: or the Gentleman Comedian* (1780), ed. by Rick Incurvati, *Early Novels, Novels and Selected Plays*, p. 44. Also quoted by Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 15.

then took up Holcroft's impetus in his own fiction, writing into the form a model of politically inflected friendship. I will investigate this model in detail as it features in Godwin's most powerful and thought-provoking novel, *Caleb Williams* (1794). Through Caleb's isolated state Godwin accentuates the crucial principle that man is a sociable being. Naomi Tadmor's study on friendship and kinship throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is a particularly useful source.<sup>55</sup> She explores ideas of family and considers how these linked with society more broadly. Tadmor's findings become particularly relevant when examining Godwin's novel *Caleb Williams* and Caleb's confusion and misinterpretation of meaning when he becomes part of Falkland's family.

Clemit has referred to Godwin's 'early recognition of the value of feeling [in the published ending of *Caleb Williams*] that would not be formulated until the second edition of *Political Justice*'.<sup>56</sup> This thesis supplements Clemit's findings and pinpoints Godwin's 'early recognition of the value of feeling' in his early manuscript 'Notes on Friendship' and the affection felt in intimate intellectual friendship.

My thesis will move to consider the political theatre of the 1794 Treason Trials and will argue that it was a letter of Holcroft's, written moments after surrendering himself on the charge of High Treason, that motivated Godwin to write the influential political pamphlet *Cursory Strictures*. Holcroft used their friendship, and his letter, to spur Godwin to reach for that 'nobler purpose'—namely composing a reformist work for the 'general good'. *Cursory Strictures* was a breakthrough for Godwin and his circle in terms of style and literary effects; for the first time it effectively transferred the language of radical friendship beyond the circle to a wider public. Written the

---

<sup>55</sup> Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>56</sup> Pamela Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fiction of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 67.

same year as *Caleb Williams*, *Cursory Strictures* is further evidence of Godwin's 'early recognition of the value of feeling,' and of friendship.<sup>57</sup> John Barrell and Alan Wharam have read *Cursory Strictures* in terms of its legal significance.<sup>58</sup> However, I shall argue that in *Cursory Strictures* Godwin identifies and writes to the people as friends and uses the voice of a friend to extend and motivate politically transforming friendship.

Having discussed *Cursory Strictures*, I will turn my attention to vital changes Godwin makes to *Political Justice* in order to incorporate the value of feeling. In 1795, Holcroft wrote a letter to Godwin in which he considers whether it is wrong to record the affection he feels for his friend.<sup>59</sup> In the same letter he urges Godwin to push on with his second edition of *Political Justice*. Reading Holcroft's letter alongside a review he published of the first edition of *Political Justice*, effectively signals an error in Godwin's original work and its failure to acknowledge the value of feeling.<sup>60</sup> I will use Holcroft's letter, and correspondence sent between Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft (during their developing relationship, 1796-7), alongside Godwin's *Memoirs of an Author of the Vindication of Woman* (1797) (published following Wollstonecraft's death) to examine changes Godwin makes to *Political Justice* (1796, 1798).<sup>61</sup>

Godwin felt strongly that friendship should be the basis on which any intimate relationship should develop. An examination of

---

<sup>57</sup> Quoting Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 67, as above.

<sup>58</sup> See John Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Alan Wharam, *The Treason Trials, 1794* (Leicester and London: Leicester University Press, 1992).

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Holcroft, 'Thomas Holcroft to William Godwin: concerning Holcroft's fall from a ladder: Gout; et al,' Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger, c. 2, fols. 101-2, <<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/1500-1900/abinger/images/Dep.c.511-221.jpg>>.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas Holcroft, 'Mr Godwin's Enquiry Concerning Political Justice,' *The Monthly Review* XI (1793).

<sup>61</sup> For Wollstonecraft's letters to Godwin, see Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Collected Letters*, ed. by Janet Todd (London: Penguin, 2003); for Godwin's to Wollstonecraft see *GL I*; William Godwin, *Memoirs of an Author of the Vindication of Woman* (London: J. Johnson, 1797).

his novel *Fleetwood: Or, The New Man of Feeling* (1805) and the complexities of affection as felt in friendship and affection in marriage as depicted in that text further emphasises the important place of friendship.<sup>62</sup>

Both Gurion Taussig and Felicity James have examined how Coleridge and significant others of his circle struggled with what they perceived as ‘Godwin’s disregard for affectionate bonds.’<sup>63</sup> My thesis aims to examine how early on, inspired by the friendships evident in rational dissent and its academies, Godwin wrote affection into friendship. The same affection is evident in an intimate model set out in *Political Justice* that remains unchanged in the revised editions; and which is written again into his later essay ‘Of Love and Friendship.’ I will consider how vital experience helped Godwin to more fully realise his own beliefs as he began to incorporate the value of feeling more fully into his theory.

In order to achieve the aims of this thesis, it will be necessary to examine the venues through which Godwin thought philosophical friendship could be disseminated; these included sociable circles, books, and theatre. Chapters One and Two focus on the historical context in which Godwin’s model was formed; the key contexts are, Chapter One: the early influences of rational dissent and its academies and Chapter Two: dinner and tea parties and booksellers’ shops and how they helped Godwin to develop his belief in the advantage of ‘unreserved communication in a smaller circle’ (*PJ*, 118), followed by reservations about noisy assemblies at certain sites of sociability such as the coffee-house. Importantly, these chapters will establish how *Political Justice* (1793) presents theory emerging from practice.

---

<sup>62</sup> William Godwin, *Fleetwood: or, The New Man of Feeling*, ed. by Gary Handwerk and A. A. Markley (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2000).

<sup>63</sup> Gurion Taussig, *Coleridge and the Idea of Friendship, 1789-1804* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2002); Felicity James, *Charles Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth: Reading Friendship in the 1790s* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 154.



Chapter Three examines the influence of Holcroft, his significance as actor and playwright and as a lapsed dissenter. Holcroft's early narrative *Manthorn the Enthusiast* (1778-9) considers religious fanaticism, undesirable spouting clubs, and the cultural importance of theatre, so that Holcroft may be seen as developing his own sociable model. Holcroft is instrumental in helping Godwin to progress with his belief in the capacity of theatre to carry moral and political truths. The chapter will move to consider Godwin's novel *Caleb Williams* (1794) in which Godwin develops his and Holcroft's belief in the novel of political purpose. Godwin uses Caleb's isolated state to emphasise the need for moral equality, and to accentuate a crucial principle: that man is a sociable being. Chapter Four will focus on changes in Godwin's personal reflection on friendship, and how later versions of *Political Justice* and his later novels emphasise love and feeling. Beginning with an influential political pamphlet of Godwin's, this section will consider how *Cursory Strictures* (1794) is testament to the power of affection felt in friendship, as having being spurred by Holcroft who had been arrested on a charge of treason, Godwin publicly considers the plight of his friend(s). Considering the changes made to *Political Justice* (1796, 1798) and Godwin's relationship and marriage to Mary Wollstonecraft (1797), will lead to examination of his novel *Fleetwood: Or, The New Man of Feeling* (1805) and the complexities of affection as felt in friendship, and affection in marriage as depicted in that text.

## Chapter One: Literary and Social Context

I will use this and the following chapter to focus on historical context in order to ascertain the cognate meanings and functions of friendship in the public and more particularly political sphere. In this chapter, I will examine rational dissenting communities to establish key conceptions and practices of sociability and their influence on Godwin. William Godwin attended Hoxton Dissenting Academy during the years 1773-8. Peter Marshall states that ‘the importance of Godwin’s five-year stay at Hoxton, which has hitherto been virtually ignored, can indeed hardly be overestimated.’<sup>1</sup> Building on Marshall’s claim, I will use this section of my thesis to consider Godwin’s dissenting academy training and I will examine evidence of enduring influence on the model of friendship set out by him. Significantly, Godwin’s manuscript ‘Notes on Friendship’, which was most likely written as a sermon during his academy training, reveals how early on he devised a model which remained consistent in *Political Justice* (1793) and his later essay ‘Of Love and Friendship,’ published in 1831.

Firstly, I will consider how the academies encouraged open discussion and enquiry which helped Godwin to develop what Mark Philp has described as *Political Justice*’s central (and unwavering) belief ‘that it is through the practice of private judgment and public discussion that we come to recognise and act upon moral truths.’<sup>2</sup> The academies took great satisfaction in their freedom to educate, and their emphasis on open discussion, debate, and rational enquiry, which were viewed as essential in the search for truth.

Secondly, I will examine how emphasis on shared textual production and the importance of carrying vital truths more widely

---

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, *William Godwin*, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Philp. *Godwin’s Political Justice*, p. 169.

was an academy principle that would also form a key part of Godwin's philosophy. Academies enabled dissenters, who felt their exclusion deeply, to form crucial bonds with other like-minded non-conformists whilst crucially training the next generation to carry on their religious tradition. Vital to this process was the production and dissemination of literary texts. The 'textual culture' of the academies would help Godwin to develop his belief that 'minds of great acuteness and ability have commonly existed in a cluster' (*PJ*, 118). It is evident through Godwin's letters and his diary that he, and those who would come to be close to him, practised sharing manuscripts and relied on literary collaboration in their shared cause of reform.

The enduring influence of the dissenting academy is evident in Godwin's belief in private judgment, but also in the theory he set out on friendship and sociability. I will use this final section to consider how the common intellectual culture and network that linked former pupils after leaving the academies influenced Godwin's own model of a similar network of connected enlightened individuals in *Political Justice*. Consideration of exactly who and what was incorporated into Godwin's social and intellectual circles and daily experiences helps us to better understand how Godwin gained the practical experience necessary to carry over into his philosophical treatise *Political Justice*.

### **Free Enquiry: Academy Teaching and Practice**

Owing to their resolution not to conform, dissenters were unable to attend either Oxford or Cambridge: their academies were designed to overcome this disadvantage by providing a modern education.<sup>3</sup> Joseph Priestley was, for a period, a tutor at Warrington Academy and best

---

<sup>3</sup> See Stuart Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism: Political Rhetoric, 1770-1814* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) for a detailed account of the campaign to relieve Dissenting ministers and schoolmasters from the need to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles, and how keenly non-conformists felt exclusion.

captures the pride dissenters felt in their academies and in their teaching methodology:

While your universities resemble pools of *stagnant water*, ours are like *rivers*, which, taking their natural course, fertilize a whole country [...] the minds of our youth, being unfettered by subscription, are certainly more open to the impression of truth.<sup>4</sup>

Such emphasis on a quest for truth would form a key component of Godwin's thought. The satisfaction academies took in their freedom to educate, and their emphasis on open discussion, debate, and rational enquiry, which were viewed as essential in the search for truth, are eloquently recorded by Thomas Belsham:

Young men, if allowed to inquire, will think and judge, and speak and act for themselves, and will sometimes differ from their seniors in opinion, and will carry matters to a greater length than those that are older and wiser can approve. Put a stop to freedom of inquiry, and I will engage for it that the Trustees will never be troubled with petitions and remonstrances. But would they wish to purchase peace at so dear a price?<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Priestley, *Letter to the Right Hon. William Pitt...on the Subjects of Toleration and Church Establishments, occasioned by his Speech against the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts on Wednesday, the 28<sup>th</sup> March 1787* (London: J. Johnson, 1787), p. 32. For an account of Priestley at Warrington see Padraig O'Brien, *Warrington Academy 1757-86: Its Predecessors and Successors* (Lancashire: Owl Books, 1989), pp. 56-67.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Belsham, *Memoirs of the late Reverend Thomas Belsham including a brief Notice of his published Works and copious Extracts from his Diary, together with letters to and from his Friends and Correspondents*, ed. by J. Williams (published by editor, 1835), pp. 360-1. Quoted in Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism*, p. 51. As David Wykes's article concerning 'the closure of the Northampton Academy in 1798' demonstrates, the students' right to exert freedom of enquiry and thought would come to form part of the blame for an academy's failure and closure. Trustees and tutors who sought to instil orthodox principles could tolerate neither Priestley's, or Belsham's liberal educational methodology, nor their Unitarianism. As Wykes notes, the closure at Northampton helps to 'identify the growing

Priestley and Belsham note how society cannot operate to its full potential under tyranny: individual reflection, private judgment, freedom of enquiry and discussion, are vital to progress, and, crucially, man should be willing to own when he may be wrong.<sup>6</sup> Priestley's and Belsham's comments signal their belief in mankind's capabilities. The syllabuses at academies like Warrington, Northampton, and Hoxton, were therefore designed to be provocative and engaging: they were deliberately varied and included 'the study of natural and moral sciences, secular history, mathematics, logic, oratory, poetry, and the Latin and Greek classics in general', alongside the traditional subjects for ministerial training, such as the biblical languages, 'profane and ecclesiastical history, patristics, ethics, and preaching' (*GL I*, xxxvi).<sup>7</sup> Emphasis was on training young men for the ministry and the curriculum reflected 'a belief in the value of secular learning to a minister'; however, equipping men with knowledge and skills beyond the ministerial also confirmed a

---

tensions within rational dissent as a result of the emergence of a more militant Unitarianism.' In terms of this thesis it is a useful example and reminder of the types of tension and strife that could develop in contrast to the ideal academy model. David L. Wykes, 'Rational Dissent, Unitarianism, and the Closure of the Northampton Academy in 1798,' *Journal of Religious History*, 41.1 (2017), 3-21 (p. 3).

<sup>6</sup> Godwin repeatedly revised his philosophical treatise *Political Justice*, an act which, when viewed in alignment with academy methodology, reveals how closely he held to, but was willing to advance, their principles concerning the value and effect of open discussion and enquiry.

<sup>7</sup> Quoting Smith (*The Birth of Modern Education*, pp. 184-5). Tessa Whitehouse records that: 'Samuel Morton Savage led the academy [at Hoxton] and was the theological tutor. He probably based his lectures on Philip Doddridge's interconnected course of pneumatology, ethics, and divinity lectures. Notes on ethics lectures based on those of John Eames and delivered at Hoxton survive. Abraham Rees was classical and mathematics tutor, librarian, and resident tutor. His mathematical lectures (based on those of John Eames, and written in Latin) covered algebra, trigonometry, mechanics, and mathematical and perspectival drawing. Andrew Kippis was the philological tutor and gave lectures on belles lettres and the history of eloquence and chronology, some of which were based on Joseph Priestley's *A Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language, and Universal Grammar* (1762) and John Ward's *A System of Oratory* (1759).' 'Hoxton Academy (1764-1785),' The Queen Mary Centre for Religion and Literature in English, *Dissenting Academies Project*, <<http://www.qmulreligionandliterature.co.uk>>.

willingness to accept that not every student would become an ordained minister (*GL I*, xxxvi).<sup>8</sup>

Independent minister and writer Philip Doddridge played an instrumental part in the formation of the academies: his lectures became an essential text and formed the basis of the dissenting academies' teaching framework.<sup>9</sup> As a former pupil of Doddridge's, Kippis recalled that it was Doddridge's aim that such a variety of weekly lectures would 'entertain' and 'engage' the students minds.<sup>10</sup> Kippis shows that 'engagement' required a pupil's full participation and attention as, once assembled in class, 'an account of the reasonings, demonstrations, scriptures, or facts considered in the former lectures and references' was expected from the students, and Doddridge 'allowed and encouraged them to propose any objections, which might arise in their own minds, or had occurred in the authors they perused.'<sup>11</sup> Doddridge's pedagogical method was adopted by key academies and was devised, from the offset, to coincide with rational dissenting thought, which was based on independent and free enquiry. When Kippis became a tutor at Hoxton he also adopted the practice of his former tutor, which Godwin then benefitted from. William St Clair notes that 'far from trying to inculcate doctrines by force and by repetition, the Reverend Abraham Rees and the Reverend Andrew Kippis encouraged debate and controversy. Godwin became known in the college for calm dedication and passionate argument.'<sup>12</sup> Belsham's comments further demonstrate that academy tutors genuinely

---

<sup>8</sup> It has been recorded that, 'in his twenty-two years as tutor Doddridge educated over 200 students, of whom 120 became ministers.' *ODNB*, quoting Orton, *Memoirs*, p. 120. For a detailed account of dissenting academy students who became other than ministers, many of whom were eminent in their chosen professions, see O'Brien, *Warrington Academy*, pp. 85-93.

<sup>9</sup> Doddridge had been an early academy pupil of John Jennings at Kibworth, then Hinckley. See *ODNB*.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Kippis, 'Doddridge (Philip)', *Biographia Britannica, or, The Lives of the Most Eminent Persons who have Flourished in Great Britain and Ireland*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. vol. V (London: John Nichols and others, 1793), p. 285.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281.

<sup>12</sup> William St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys: The Biography of a Family* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), p. 9.

endorsed differences of opinion. To remain open to what Priestley defined as ‘the impression of truth,’ it was important that conversation could be combative whilst remaining friendly. Godwin would advance arguments of similar kind in *Political Justice* which states that ‘the discovery of individual and personal truth is to be effected in the same manner as the discovery of general truth, by discussion. From the collision of disagreeing accounts justice and reason will be produced. Mankind seldom think much of any particular subject, without coming to think right at last’ (*PJ*, 339). As a student at a notable dissenting academy, Godwin had been educated not only in the tenets but also in the pedagogical culture of rational dissent, which, as Pamela Clemit notes, included ‘the spirit of active questioning,’ that, ‘extended beyond the religious to the civic sphere’ (*GL* I, xxxvi-vii). Godwin could confidently translate fundamental rational dissenting thought, experience, and practice, into vital forms of *Political Justice*.

### **The ‘Textual Culture’ of Academies**

Academies enabled dissenters, who felt their exclusion deeply, to form crucial bonds with other like-minded non-conformists whilst crucially training the next generation to carry on their religious tradition.<sup>13</sup> Vital to this process was the production and dissemination of literary texts. As Marshall notes, when Godwin entered Hoxton in 1773, ‘Kippis was actively engaged in the campaign to widen the Toleration Act.’ Speaking for most non-conformists Kippis stated that:

We dissent, because we deny the right of any body of men, whether civil or ecclesiastical, to impose human tests, creeds, or articles; and because we think it our duty, not to submit to any

---

<sup>13</sup> Whitehouse, *Textual Culture*, p. 16.

such authority, but to protest against it, as a violation of our essential liberty to judge and act for ourselves in matters of religion.<sup>14</sup>

The dissenting cause had gathered fresh fervour. As Stuart Andrews shows, dissenting ministers and school masters, like Kippis, willingly engaged in ‘pulpit-politics’ where political subjects frequently formed part of non-conformist sermons.<sup>15</sup> Kippis openly attacked church and state, the Church of England and government institutions, and argued the right to exercise free enquiry, putting emphasis on private judgment: all matters of consequence in the theory Godwin would later develop.<sup>16</sup> Sermons could forcefully and dramatically convey important messages through the captivating means of oratory, but it was also common to publish sermons, or a series of sermons. Likewise, Priestley’s *Letter to the Right Hon. William Pitt*, quoted above, is just one example of how speeches written as letters were then published in the form of political pamphlets, where ‘Politics continued to go hand in hand with theology.’<sup>17</sup> Periodicals were also recognised for certain religious and/or political leanings, for example, the Unitarian editor of the *Sheffield Register*, Joseph Gales, openly aligned himself and his paper with radical reform and printed extracts from the first part of *Rights of Man*.<sup>18</sup> In 1783/4 Kippis would be

---

<sup>14</sup> Marshall, *William Godwin*, p. 42, quoting from Kippis, *A Vindication of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers*, p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> Andrews, ‘Part II: Pulpit-Politics’ in, *Unitarian Radicalism*, pp. 41-64.

<sup>16</sup> Marshall argues: ‘Godwin’s anarchism, with its rejection of all forms of established authority, is little more than a strict application of the Dissenters’ sacred and indefeasible right of private judgment.’ *William Godwin*, p. 43. Wykes writes: ‘Although rational dissent sheltered a wide variety of opinions, orthodox as well as heterodox, it was characterised by an absolute belief in an individual’s right to exercise private judgement in matters of religion, and by a rejection of all religious tests and human impositions. Dissenting academies were to respond to these developments.’ ‘Rational Dissent, Unitarianism, and the Closure of the Northampton Academy in 1798,’ p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism*, p. 122.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 119. As Andrews further notes, Gales was ‘a founder-member of the Sheffield Constitutional Society.’ His publication would have been intended to spark debate. Holcroft and Godwin were involved, with ‘an informal committee of sympathizers’ in securing the



responsible for helping Godwin, who had given up his position as minister, to obtain his first authorial role as assistant in compiling the dissenting-led *New Annual Register*. The close community of the academies forged only one link in a large chain: the greater aim and vision was to employ friendship, which incorporated collaborative literary production, to disseminate texts containing vital truths that engaged in national and international debates more widely.

Whitehouse defines this as their ‘textual culture’; she writes that tutors such as Isaac Watts, Doddridge, and Kippis ‘all saw publishing as a central component of their work which they pursued while (and by) participating in epistolary networks and exchanging manuscripts: this is understood as their textual culture.’<sup>19</sup> Isabel Rivers succinctly summarises this ‘textual culture’ when she records that:

Doddridge also edited the works of others and gave literary help to his friends. For example, he made an abstract of the second volume of Warburton’s *Divine Legation* and corrected Whitefield’s *Journals* and Fordyce’s *Dialogues* at their authors’ request, wrote a prefatory letter to Joseph Williams’s *Abridgment of Mr. David Brainerd’s Journal* (1748), edited Robert Leighton’s *Expository Works* (1748), and as Watts’s literary executor together with David Jennings edited Watts’s posthumous *The Improvement of the Mind*, part 2 (1751) and his *Works* (6 vols., 1753).<sup>20</sup>

Although by no means exhaustive, the above passage gives an indication of the extent of involvement and production, the purpose of which ‘sought to promote practical piety, to consolidate the

---

publication of Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man*. See St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, pp. 48-50.

<sup>19</sup> Whitehouse, *Textual Culture*, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> *ODNB*.

intellectual status of dissent, and to provide educational models.’<sup>21</sup> Further than this, the production of texts supported the idea that public speaking and publication were a means of fostering friendly open discussion. Doddridge’s lectures were designed to encourage individual reflection that would then stimulate conversation and debate. Rivers notes that Doddridge ‘assembled from various authors arguments for and against a particular position, discussed their merits, and indicated his own position; the students followed up the references in the library, and at the next lecture were questioned on their reading and conclusions.’<sup>22</sup> As has been noted, Doddridge’s ‘educational model’ was fundamental to key academies; his course of lectures was a basic text at Hoxton, but, significantly, they also depict the natural workings of the ‘textual culture’ Whitehouse defines. Doddridge had originally devised his lectures for the use of his own students, but a clause in his will stipulated that he wished for them to be published after his decease, a clear indication that he envisioned they be a source of continued, and wider discussion. Kippis undertook the task to oversee the third edition and his preface reveals how dissenting connections, friendship, and ‘textual culture’ combined to try to ensure the wishes of ‘a father,’ or brother by blood in nature were met.<sup>23</sup> Having explained that it was Doddridge’s vision to update and expand the lectures, Kippis writes:

I entertained no doubt of my being able to obtain assistance from the manuscript references of such tutors as had regularly gone through the Doctor’s Course. In this respect I have happily succeeded. The Reverend Benjamin Edwards of Northampton

---

<sup>21</sup> Whitehouse, *Textual Culture*, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> *ODNB*. Kippis also recalls how, often on a Saturday evening, Doddridge would read his early sermons to the students gathered. Kippis notes how they were used as ‘models’ for the students’ imitation, and they obviously sparked discussion as they were considered ‘superior to those which he could then have leisure to give.’ Kippis, *Biographia Britannica*, p. 271.

<sup>23</sup> Marshall, *William Godwin*, p. 34, quoting from Kippis, *Biographia Britannica*.

has favoured me with the use of his copy of Doctor Savage's notes, whence I have been supplied with a considerable number of references several of which might have escaped my own recollection. It is still a superior aid which I have derived from the communication of references of my late excellent friend, the Reverend Samuel Merivale, for some time Theological Tutor in a Protestant Dissenting Academy at Exeter. For this communication I am indebted to the Reverend James Manning of the same city, Mr Merivale's relation.<sup>24</sup>

Doddridge had devised the course of lectures having been influenced by his own tutor Jennings. In laying the foundations, he fully expected they be built upon, by others as capable and experienced as he, thereby ensuring that the lectures impart new found truths and wisdom. Kippis reveals how the practical notes of his colleague Savage at Hoxton come to be obtained through a tutor at Northampton, whilst the relative of a, now departed, friend at an academy in Exeter is a further source, of 'superior aid.' This 'textual culture' is again shown to be expansive. Kippis notes the many kinds of dissenting connections, whether former student and tutor as in his case and Doddridge's, or (ex-) colleague, friend, and/or relation. Kippis's comments concerning Manning reveal how 'textual culture' was a basis of friendship, when he continues 'Mr Manning, with that zeal for promoting every valuable undertaking which marks his character, and with that friendship which I have experienced in many pleasing instances, voluntarily undertook to transcribe the references in question, together with some other papers that might be conducive to my purpose.'<sup>25</sup> The 'utility,' 'pleasure' and 'contribution' Godwin

---

<sup>24</sup> 'Preface' by Andrew Kippis in, Philip Doddridge, *A Course of Lectures on the Principal Subjects in Pneumatology, Ethics, and Divinity with References to the Most Considerable Authors on Each Subject: To Which, Are Now Added, A Great Number of References, and Many Notes of Reference, to the Various Writers, on the Same Topics, Who Have Altered Since the Doctor's Decease*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (London: S. Crowder and others, 1794), p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

writes of in his early manuscript on friendship are evidenced here through Mannings's textual undertaking for Doddridge, Kippis, and ultimately the greater good of dissent. They are also reflected in Godwin's and James Marshall's friendship and Marshall's textual assistance.<sup>26</sup>

Another of Doddridge's most influential publications was *The Family Expositor, or, A Paraphrase and Version of the New Testament*, which Godwin's grandfather had helped publish. The first three volumes appeared during Doddridge's lifetime, but volumes four to six were 'edited by Orton, who transcribed part of the sixth volume with help from some of Doddridge's students.'<sup>27</sup> Academy students were used and drawn in to the publication process, and the academy's/ies 'textual culture,' so that even the importance of exemplary note-taking was impressed upon every student. Lecture notes could find their way in to academy libraries as a serious source of reference, particularly before the publication of lectures. Whitehouse notes that the academies were 'associative, supportive communit[ies] whose members strove to combine social action and intellectual endeavour. The younger men in their network read books written by the older men and attended lectures given by them. Later,

---

<sup>26</sup> Whilst at Hoxton, Godwin was noted for his singularity, but he managed to make one intimate friend with fellow student James Marshall, whom Godwin remained friends with for the rest of their lives. Although frustratingly little is known of Marshall, later letters and Godwin's diary show Marshall was frequently at Godwin's home and acted as a trustee/uncle for Godwin's daughters Fanny Imlay and Mary Godwin, when Mary Wollstonecraft had died, and Godwin was away from home. Marshall often formed part of significant dinner and tea parties with Godwin, and the frequency of Marshall's attendance at Godwin's house, and the way in which he took care of Godwin's household is more akin to that of a family member, thus upholding academy sentiments regarding 'family.' The editors of Godwin's diary note that: 'Marshall seems to have been involved in translating and editing, and he is thought to have transcribed a number of Godwin's letters and minor works,' demonstrating textual importance and usefulness in friendship. In a letter of Godwin's to Marshall, Godwin writes: 'With respect to Chandler I know not how to direct you; if I were at home I should seek direction from you' (*GL* II, 147). Godwin neatly displays how naturally mentoring and intimate friendship entwined, and reveals the importance of being able to discuss both small and great matters with candour. He signals the real workings of essential equality in friendship.

<sup>27</sup> *ODNB*.

they delivered lectures of their own modelled on those of their tutors, and edited the texts of their mentors.’<sup>28</sup> Sermons and practice sermons were also written with a view to being delivered; so that, the notion of deliverance, or publication was always pressing.

The ‘textual culture’ of the academies would help Godwin to develop his belief that ‘minds of great acuteness and ability have commonly existed in a cluster’ (*PJ*, 118). It is evident through Godwin’s letters and his diary that he, and those who would come to be close to him, practised sharing manuscripts and relied on literary collaboration in their shared cause of reform. Holcroft would be instrumental in demonstrating how politics could be conveyed through fiction in the forms of drama and the political novel.<sup>29</sup> Such politically inspired literary friendship drew from the ‘textual culture’ — which Whitehouse further describes as ‘a distinctive form of sociability with education and friendship at its heart’ — of the academies’ model and relied on private judgment and wider discussion.<sup>30</sup> Godwin would write in *Political Justice* that literature alone is not ‘adequate to all the purposes of human improvement’ (*PJ*, 22). Literature was the base from which crucial conversation developed, but small groups were vital to discuss and debate vital aspects of truth contained in written form. Godwin’s greater vision was to utilise academy thought and practice to reach society generally: small groups would branch into other small groups until, eventually, all would have access to vital truths and to political justice. The common intellectual culture and network that linked former pupils after leaving the academy, influenced Godwin’s own vision of a similar network of connected enlightened individuals as devised in his *Political Justice* model.

---

<sup>28</sup> Whitehouse, *Textual Culture*, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Godwin would write enthusiastically in his preface to *Caleb Williams* that he had completed a work for ‘persons whom books of philosophy and science are never likely to reach.’ *CW*, 312.

<sup>30</sup> Whitehouse, *Textual Culture*, p. 23.

## Mentoring and Friendship

Whitehouse draws attention to the multiple connections and overlapping relationships that existed between dissenting academy men ‘between men of different generations, between friends and fellow-students, between tutors and pupils, among brothers, fathers, and sons.’<sup>31</sup> Demonstrating how Godwin was closely connected to Doddridge, Marshall writes:

The fundamental text at Hoxton was Doddridge’s *Course of Lectures on the Principal Subjects in Pneumatology, Ethics and Divinity* [...] Doddridge was a major influence in Godwin’s education in more ways than one. Godwin’s grandfather had been Doddridge’s intimate friend and helped publish his *Family Expositor*. His father had been Doddridge’s pupil at Northampton Academy and had adopted his tempered Calvinism. And now at Hoxton, Godwin came in daily contact with Kippis who compared Doddridge to Cicero and considered him no less than ‘my benefactor, my tutor, my friend, and my father.’<sup>32</sup>

Partly due to such intimate connections, dissenting academies were characteristically called ‘the family’ by both tutors and students and, depending on the academy, students would either lodge in the homes

---

<sup>31</sup> Whitehouse includes a useful table to show the numerous overlapping relationships forged between the Watts-Doddridge circle, through education, personal association, and textual work. Whitehouse, *Textual Culture*, pp. 23-4.

<sup>32</sup> Marshall, *William Godwin*, p. 34, quoting from Kippis, *Biographia Britannica*, where Kippis also writes: ‘I have often thought that in certain points [Doddridge] had a resemblance of Cicero. He resembled him in the love of fame, and in not possessing what may be called the sternness of fortitude. He resembled him likewise in more estimable qualities; in the copiousness, diffusion, and pathos of his eloquence; and in the sensibilities and tenderness of his mind, especially as displayed in the loss of his daughter.’ p. 308.

of their tutors, or, as in the case of Godwin, board together.<sup>33</sup> Kippis's comment signifies such association. In the absence of parents, a tutor's role as mentor proved of great significance.<sup>34</sup> An impression of Doddridge by Kippis, in *Biographia Britannica*, describes Doddridge as a concerned mentor:

One recollection of Dr. Doddridge's zealous concern for the improvement of his pupils was that he allowed them a free access to him in his own study, to ask his advice with regard to any part of their course, and to mention to him such difficulties as occurred to them either in their private reading or their lectures. In these cases he treated them with the utmost candour and tenderness, and pointed out whatever he thought would contribute to their advancement in knowledge.<sup>35</sup>

Kippis paints a relaxed picture of Doddridge and aspects of academy life, beyond the classroom, noting 'free access' and unreserved communication. He goes on to acknowledge that the 'method of education' carried out at Hoxton bears close resemblance to that of Doddridge at Northampton.<sup>36</sup> Given that Kippis notes the similarities between methods at Hoxton and those of Doddridge at Northampton, it seems probable that he would have granted the same 'free access' to

---

<sup>33</sup> See Whitehouse, *Textual Culture*, p. 25; also, Padraig O'Brien, *Warrington Academy*, pp. 49-50. Godwin was a boarder at Hoxton, see Marshall, *William Godwin*, p. 44. Felicity James notes that: 'recently, critics have been particularly interested in how ideas of family might connect with broader networks of relationship.' See 'Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbault Circle, 1740-1860: An Introduction' in, James and Inkster, *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbault Circle 1740-1860*, 1-27 (pp. 5-6), for James's discussion.

<sup>34</sup> See Marshall's account of Godwin's time, before Hoxton, as a solitary boarder with the severe Samuel Newton and his equally cold wife. Marshall notes: 'To stay with them as their only boarder was to prove a devastating experience for so sensitive a youth,' demonstrating how the tutor's role as mentor was crucial. *William Godwin*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>35</sup> Kippis, *Biographia Britannica*, p. 282.

<sup>36</sup> Kippis writes that: 'Dr. Doddridge's method of education bears a near resemblance to other seminaries of the like kind', including Warrington. 'The institution at Hoxton was of the same foundation, Dr. Savage, Dr. Rees, and myself being distinct and un subordinate tutors in the theological, mathematical, and philological departments.' *Ibid*, p. 283.

his own pupils and followed a similar, if not the same, process of mentoring. Kippis describes ‘the utmost candour and tenderness’ with which a tutor treated a searching or struggling student on matters of learning. Clemit has noted ‘the Dissenting principle of candour, which might best be defined as a commitment to act and speak according to the impartial dictates of conscience,’ so it is evident how the mentoring process holds to the academy model of friendly and open discussion (*GLI*, xxxvi). Kippis also recalls how pupils who had completed their academy training continued to write to Doddridge to seek ‘advice and direction, under the various difficulties which occurred to them in their respective situations.’<sup>37</sup> A letter of Godwin’s to Kippis confirms how this was reflected in their own relationship. Following his own academy training, Godwin, having taken a post as minister, wrote to Kippis to describe a dispute between himself and members of the congregation concerning holy communion and baptism and whether it was acceptable to administer either before ordination. Revealing how natural it was for an ex-student to turn to his academy mentor, Godwin sought Kippis’s counsel and stated that ‘I therefore thought of taking the liberty [...] of writing you an account of my situation, & begging you to advise me what to do in it’ (*GL I*, 14). Whilst Godwin’s admission demonstrates that this was standard academy practice, it also signifies the deeper relationship that could occur between pupils and their academy mentors. Just as Kippis had thought of his own tutor Doddridge, Godwin would come to consider Kippis as both friend and mentor.<sup>38</sup>

In Godwin’s early manuscript ‘Notes on Friendship,’ he reveals academy influence when he writes that ‘friendship is equally subservient to our happiness, our virtue, and our prudence, and is perhaps next to these the most invaluable jewel the Almighty has

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 304.

<sup>38</sup> See Marshall, *William Godwin*, pp. 42-5 for an informative account of Kippis’s influence on Godwin. Marshall notes that: ‘Kippis played an important role in shaping Godwin’s views on literature and history.’ p. 45.



placed within the reach of mortals.’<sup>39</sup> In the search for individual and greater truths Godwin asks, ‘What can be more salutary than the advice of a friend?’ Having received such advice ‘with impartiality’ and ‘having weighed it with candour,’ Godwin continues, ‘Thus shall we be withheld from every rash processing and enabled to act with a wisdom to which no single person could ever attain.’<sup>40</sup> There is a duty to give advice wisely and honestly, but it is important to consider such advice with an equal measure of self-honesty. Godwin searches for such advice and collective wisdom in his letter to Kippis concerning the dispute amongst his congregation, and demonstrates how friendship incorporates mentorship, revealing how Kippis is both friend and mentor. When Godwin writes in *Political Justice* that ‘the discovery of individual and personal truth is to be effected in the same manner as the discovery of general truth, by discussion. From the collision of disagreeing accounts justice and reason will be produced,’ he is able to write from multiple experience (*PJ*, 339). Free enquiry, the friendly and open, if argumentative, discussion of academy classrooms is evident here in a more intimate form and on a more personal level with academy mentors and close friends.

### **Post-Academy Life: Constants and Changes**

Whilst at Hoxton, Godwin had zealously embraced academy principles concerning freedom of enquiry: his peers had to reckon with what Godwin himself defines as his ‘calm and impassionate discussion.’ He further recalls that, ‘I was remarked by my fellow-collegians for the intrepidity of my opinions and the tranquil fearlessness of my temper.’<sup>41</sup> Kippis shows how following Doddridge’s method meant that academy pupils were expected to

---

<sup>39</sup> ‘Notes on Friendship,’ MS Abinger, c. 36, fols. 40-4.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Charles Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries* (London, 1876), I, p. 16.

engage by giving their full attention and participation in classroom debates, and were ‘encouraged to propose any objections which might arise in their own minds, or had occurred in the authors they perused’: it therefore seems that it was Godwin’s unwillingness, or inability to ‘switch off’ that caused his peers unease and instilled an uncomfortable sense of intense personal scrutiny. His closest friend James Marshall points towards this when he writes of ‘the weight of your political virtue, which has hitherto & always will if you retain it bear you down. Could you prevail with yourself to part with one half of this ponderous quality that pervades your little frame.’<sup>42</sup> Godwin’s line of questioning had helped to ensure that his time as a boarder at Hoxton had not been the happiest, yet the example of tutors like Kippis, ‘men of outstanding integrity and candour, who called for justice and liberty and practised what they preached, showed that mankind could be enlightened and free.’<sup>43</sup> Hoxton had been the means of encouraging free enquiry and rational examination ‘and trained Godwin systematically to question his inherited beliefs and to doubt existing orthodoxies.’<sup>44</sup> Godwin’s belief in private judgment had been founded, but greater emphasis on the individual, and on effective public discussion, would follow.

On leaving Hoxton in 1778, Godwin took up the ministry of a congregation at Stowmarket where the intensity of academy study did not leave him. Clemit notes that ‘the growing incompatibility between his heterodox beliefs and his ministerial calling contributed to a church dispute, concerning his administering the sacraments without being ordained, which led to his expulsion by the Stowmarket congregation in 1782’ (*GL* I, xxxvii). Godwin now considered a move to the West Indies with Marshall, but set his sights instead on literary

---

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Marshall, *William Godwin*, p. 66.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

work in London, and had a plan to become a teacher.<sup>45</sup> He planned to open a school and wrote a pamphlet outlining the aims and beliefs of his seminary. Peter Marshall remarks that *An Account of the Seminary* (1783) shows ‘just how rapidly Godwin had evolved in the five years since leaving Hoxton Academy,’ and also argues that, ‘by drawing on his own unhappy experience as a pupil, [Godwin] developed the ideas of Rousseau to write one of the most eloquent and incisive essays on libertarian education.’<sup>46</sup> However, it is clear that Godwin drew from both negative and positive aspects of his education. When, for example, he writes of unnecessary severity it is easy to identify the negative impact of his own early schooling under the harsh tuition of Samuel Newton. Drawing from his own isolated state in this early experience, Godwin writes ‘let me be permitted in this place to observe, that the association of a small number of pupils seems the most perfect mode of education. There is surely something unsuitable to the present state of mankind, in the wishing to educate our youth in perfect solitude.’<sup>47</sup> Notably, Godwin displays an early preference for small groups. In summarising his intended pedagogical method, Godwin appears to address the problems he encountered in his own mode of enquiry during his academy training, whilst he also stresses the importance of the tutor as mentor:

To familiarise to my pupil the understanding and digesting whatever he read I would consider it as an indispensable part of my business, to talk over with him familiarly the subjects, that might necessarily demand our attention. I would lead him by degrees to relate with clearness and precision the story of his

---

<sup>45</sup> Godwin’s plans are notable as they parallel Holcroft’s (who he was yet to meet). Marshall notes that Godwin ‘moved to London, probably on the advice of Andrew Kippis.’ Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 58.

<sup>47</sup> William Godwin, *An Account of the Seminary That will be Opened on Monday the Fourth Day of August, at Epsom in Surrey, For the Instruction of Twelve Pupils in the Greek, Latin, French, and English Languages* (London: T. Cadell, 1783), p. 53.

author. I would induce him to deliver his fair and genuine sentiments upon every action and character that came before us. I would frequently call upon him for a plain and simple reason for his opinion. This should always be done privately, without ostentation, and without rivalry. Thus, separate from the danger of fomenting those passions of envy and pride, that prepare at a distance for our youth so many mortifications, and at the expence of which too frequently this accomplishment is attained, I would train him to deliver his opinion upon every subject with freedom, perspicuity and fluency.<sup>48</sup>

Godwin still drew from the positive example of the academy model, but whilst Doddridge emphasised the need for academy students to ‘give an account of the reasonings, demonstrations, scriptures, or facts considered in the former lectures and references’ to their tutor and classmates, Godwin instead focuses on the individual. In effect, Godwin would encourage his pupils to develop the same method of explanation but accentuates the need for one-to-one mentoring sessions, thus enabling his students to develop in terms of private judgment and effective discourse, initially at least, without external pressures. In *Political Justice* Godwin would highlight the importance of intimate friendship (which includes mentoring), and the need for small circles where those of learning have time to develop the most effectual discourse for carrying vital truths more widely. Thus, in both his *Account of the Seminary* and *Political Justice* Godwin seems to draw from his own academy experience to try to devise the most applicable method of reasoning and enquiry. Godwin concludes his seminary pamphlet by acknowledging that:

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, pp. 50-51. Note: Godwin’s description is still close to Kippis’s account of the ‘free access’ Doddridge gave his pupils ‘to him in his own study.’

If by the pursuit of principles like these, the powers of the understanding and the heart might be developed in concert; if the pupils were trained at once to knowledge and virtue; if they were enabled to look back upon the period of their education, without regretting one instance of anxious terror, or capacious severity; if they recollected their tutor with gratitude and thought of their companions, as of those generous friends whom they would wish for their associates of their life,— in that case, the pains of the preceptor would not be thrown away.<sup>49</sup>

Godwin was able to ‘recollect’ his academy tutor Kippis ‘with gratitude’ and his ‘generous friend’ Marshall, who he ‘would wish for as an associate for life;’ but he was also able to recall the ‘anxious terror, or capacious severity’ he experienced under Newton.<sup>50</sup> Even as he was devising his own seminary, the opening pages of his pamphlet reveal that he was beginning to grapple with the idea of establishment of any kind when, outlining his central premise concerning private judgment and free enquiry, he writes ‘the state of society is incontestibly [sic] artificial; the power of one man over another must be always derived from convention, or from conquest; by nature we are equal. The necessary consequence is, that government must always depend upon the opinion of the governed. Let the most oppressed people under heaven once change their mode of thinking, and they are free.’<sup>51</sup> Godwin worked hard to design a most liberal education; however, his attempt to open the seminary failed and, encouraged by Kippis, he pursued literary work in London.

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 54.

<sup>50</sup> Marshall records how Newton complained of Godwin’s ‘proud stubbornness’, and made ‘detestable tirades’ about his ‘stiff neck.’ Then one day during an angry dispute Newton suddenly birched his pupil. It came as a terrible shock. It had never occurred to Godwin that his person could suffer such ‘ignominious violation.’ *William Godwin*, p. 19, quoting from Charles Kegan Paul, *William Godwin Friends and Contemporaries*, I, p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> *An Account of the Seminary*, p. 2.

## A Network of Connected Enlightened Individuals

The enduring influence of the dissenting academy is evident in Godwin's belief in private judgment, but also in the theory he set out on friendship and sociability. An extensive intellectual community and its networks are visible in the textual culture of dissenting academies, but rational dissenting connections were more expansive still.<sup>52</sup> Prominent academy men were respected and could command large provincial audiences. John Seed has noted how 'leading intellectual voices' of rational dissent 'were attended to and respected,' and uses a letter written by a Unitarian merchant's wife in April 1791 to demonstrate his point: 'Dr Priestley was at Manchester last week, he preached to a very crowded audience on Sunday last in Moseley Street, he was much applauded by the generality. I wished to hear so great a man and was gratified.'<sup>53</sup> Priestley recognised that his and other leading dissenters' influence 'with the vulgar and unthinking was very great.'<sup>54</sup> However, for the main, as Seed has further noted, '[a]s well as the manners of [what one dissenting minister defined as] 'polished society' and a taste for the genteel culture, rational dissent assumed a high degree of literacy.'<sup>55</sup> Seed continues, 'Priestley claimed '[i]t is no vanity to say that the Unitarian Dissenters consist, for the most part, of men of reading and reflection.'<sup>56</sup> Rational dissent boasted and relied upon an intellectual community and its networks. Godwin benefitted from maintaining a

---

<sup>52</sup> For example, for a detailed account of expansive Unitarian networks see Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism*, pp. 105-46, in which Andrews uses Samuel Taylor Coleridge's commission to preach and gather subscribers for the *Watchman* to examine far-reaching connections.

<sup>53</sup> John Seed, 'Gentleman Dissenters: The Social and Political Meanings of Rational Dissent in the 1770s and 1780s,' *Historical Journal*, 28 (1985), 316-20, (p. 20, quoting 'Mary Nicholson to Mrs J. Nicholson, 7 April 1791).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, (p. 313, quoting J. Priestley, *An Appeal to the Serious and Candid Professors of Christianity*, p. 56).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, (p. 313, quoting W. Wood, 'On Courtesy', *Sermons on social life*, London 1775, p. 76).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, (p. 312, quoting J. Priestley, *The Proper Constitution*, p. 46).

close relationship with his academy tutor Kippis, and the post-academy connections made through him. As Clemit has acknowledged, ‘in 1791 Godwin was able to renew his commitment to an ideal of moral and political autonomy chiefly because he had found an alternative to Whig patronage networks in the intellectual stimulus and social regard offered by metropolitan Rational Dissenters and their associates’ (*GL* I, xxxix). Godwin’s system of read, reflect, converse set out in *Political Justice* was drawn specifically from academy and personal experience; he envisaged a process that began with intellectual advantage precisely because it was a method that was already operative.<sup>57</sup>

Whilst Godwin could well perceive the positive aspects of academy workings and training, his introduction to the wider dissenting community, and new encounters, also helped influence his vision of a network of connected enlightened individuals. London was the principal base for intellectual exchange and contact, whilst intellectuals were also continually taking messages from the capital to the provinces and back again.<sup>58</sup> However, rather than preaching to large provincial audiences where ‘truth’ might be lost to notoriety or spectacle, Godwin recognised the benefit of forming small circles, where ‘truth’ could be sought calmly and gradually. If one or two who were from small gatherings, used to practising open debate, invited others to form part of a small circle, where frank and unreserved conversation and the same system of read, reflect, converse were encouraged, they in turn would create other small circles. Godwin

---

<sup>57</sup> As Mark Philp has argued: ‘Sociability was central to the social world of the intellectual and professional urban middle classes of the late eighteenth century. That Godwin and his friends belonged to this intellectual culture casts further doubt on claims made about the ‘queerness’ of their philosophical and political stances.’ Philp. *Godwin’s Political Justice*, p. 214.

<sup>58</sup> Tim Fulford argues that Coleridge’s inclusion of Mary Robinson in the *Annual Anthology* ‘reclaims her by contextualizing her as a Bristol poet,’ but importantly notes how her inclusion ‘also demonstrates [Coleridge’s] desire to give his coterie a London base—as well as provincial ones in Bristol and the Lakes.’ Fulford shows the workings of intellectual exchange between London and the provinces and notes London’s significance as the base of knowledgeable contact. See Fulford, *Romantic Poetry and Literary Coterie*, p. 54.

writes in *Political Justice* ‘truth is the pebble in the lake; and however slowly in the present case the circles succeed each other, they will infallibly go on till they overspread the surface’ (*PJ*, 242). Circles create other circles, and ripple and overlap until, eventually, the area they cover is great. Networks of rational dissent were vast, but the ‘intellectual stimulus’ Godwin gained through its metropolitan branches proved invaluable and helped him to envisage a method whereby similar circles and sociability could be replicated, well beyond the capital’s circumference. Godwin’s diary shows that as he maintained his friendship with Marshall, his relationship with Kippis developed and gatherings were enjoyed that included other notables such as Priestley, publishers like George Robinson and Joseph Johnson, leading to others of significance such as Holcroft and Mary Wollstonecraft. Attended as they were by men and women ‘of reading and reflection’ the smallness in number ensured greater openness of enquiry. Godwin was gaining the practical experience necessary to carry over into his philosophical treatise *Political Justice*.



## Chapter Two: Practical Experience and Theory

I will use this chapter of my thesis to examine the modes of sociability that provided Godwin with the practical experience necessary to carry over in to his philosophical treatise, *Political Justice*. Significantly, Godwin was introduced to Thomas Holcroft and whilst academy tutors, like Kippis, had encouraged free enquiry and debate in their classrooms, dinner parties signified a cross-over for Godwin as he gradually moved away from that period of his life. Firstly, I will consider how the dinner parties hosted by radical publishers George Robinson and Joseph Johnson kept Godwin and his close friend Holcroft within pivotal circles of rational dissent, but also helped to develop their belief in the benefits of meeting in small gatherings to focus more fully on moral and political truths. Around 1784 Kippis introduced Godwin to the publisher and bookseller George Robinson; significantly, Robinson was also Holcroft's publisher and was a means of bringing Godwin and Holcroft closer. Success as an author relied in part upon gaining the support of a reputable publisher and Godwin and Holcroft enjoyed the backing of one of the most prominent and respectable of all, namely Robinson. They were also on sociable terms with Joseph Johnson, whose person and establishment were of equal renown, and who would later publish certain of Godwin's works.<sup>1</sup> Friendship was a vital component in the author and publisher bond: it was crucial to the success of the partnership. The generous nature of Robinson and Johnson meant that care was extended beyond business workings; the well-being of their authors proved effective to a successful working relationship. Both Robinson and Johnson operated on a principle of hospitality: the dinners hosted by both men grew in

---

<sup>1</sup> Helen Braithwaite writes concerning Johnson: 'Indeed, the image of a man "generous, candid, and liberal" in his dealings and outlook is one repeatedly conjured up by contemporary reminiscences and reports where the one adjective that seems to cling to the bookseller above all is not "radical" (a term not yet really coined in the modern sense) so much as respectable.' *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent*, p. xiii.

reputation and were an important mode of sociability for Godwin and Holcroft. Where Dissenting Academies put emphasis on literature as a vital channel for disseminating truths, the dinner party is evidence of how progressive politics were also kept active through hospitable means. Dinners at both venues were attractive to men and often women and were noted for the intellectual stimulation and enjoyment they provided. Furthermore, circles of friendship and acquaintance were enhanced and added to in number at these convivial feasts. Importantly, dinners at Robinson's demonstrate how Godwin's friendships diversified and became instrumental in helping him to forge a politics more his own.

Considering what Godwin and Holcroft perceived as other acceptable and unacceptable modes of sociability improves our understanding of how Godwin's and Holcroft's circles functioned and where they were positioned and allows insight into their shared political philosophy and model of sociability. The shops of successful booksellers were significant sociable hubs and provided a place in which friends could meet to discuss news, politics, and the latest literary works and endeavours. In *Political Justice*, Godwin argues that the 'best interests of mankind eminently depends upon the freedom of social communication,' and I will use this section to examine how Godwin's beliefs fit with, and are in fact drawn from, a model of sociability practised at the dinner parties hosted by booksellers and within their shops.

My thesis will move to consider tea parties as another important mode of sociability. I will examine how, for both Godwin and Holcroft the tea party formed part of a course of debate and education that having been stimulated by reading, also involved writing — in the follow-up of letters — as well as conversation. Thus, by the end of these sections, I will have considered how the kinds of sociability encountered at dinner and tea parties and at bookseller's shops informed *Political Justice*, Godwin was able to write of the advantage

of ‘unreserved communication in a smaller circle’ due to the experience he gained.

Finally, I will examine the reservations Godwin and Holcroft harboured about ‘noisy assemblies’ at certain sites of sociability — notably coffee houses — and how this also inflects Godwin’s theoretical work.

### **Dinners at Robinson’s**

In his recollections, William West affectionately describes the generous nature of George Robinson and fondly recalls this liberal host. In noting some of those who ‘partook of his hospitality’ West singles out Godwin and Holcroft when he writes:

[Robinson] was a most sociable companion according to the habits of that period, was said to be a six-bottle man, sometimes knocking up, as it was termed, some of his Irish and Scotch friends [...] Nothing could be more satisfying than meeting Robinson and his son and brothers with their parties at their villa at Streatham, about six miles from London. Here I have often seen Holcroft, Godwin, Chalmers and others.<sup>2</sup>

West differentiates between the villa at Streatham, where he has ‘often seen Holcroft and Godwin,’ and Robinson’s townhouse in Paternoster Row. His observations are noteworthy as the picture he paints of the villa is relaxed and familial: ‘this snug retreat,’ we are told, ‘was a farm house shingled, or blue-boarded; with diamond latticed cottage windows, the gable end fronting the road was sheltered by a venerable Yew tree, and the whole encircled by substantial out houses and

---

<sup>2</sup> West, *Fifty Years Recollections of an Old Bookseller*, pp. 106-7. Chalmers was a biographer and literary editor, see *GD*.

excellent gardens.’<sup>3</sup> The novelty of being accepted into this family setting cannot have been lost on Godwin or Holcroft, whose parents and siblings did not surround them in the same way, and whose upbringings had been very different from the one on show. In contrast, West records that Robinson’s ‘more select parties’ which included ‘Mrs. Piozzi, Mrs. Inchbald,’ and ‘Mrs. Radcliffe’ ‘visited at his townhouse in Pater Noster Row.’<sup>4</sup> Godwin’s diary records when he dined at Robinson’s, and also identifies who else was present, but it does not specify whether the dinners were held at the villa or the townhouse. What is more pressing for Godwin is keeping a record of those in attendance and marking when noteworthy topics are discussed. Particular dinners that he and Holcroft attended are an indication that certain meals must have been more focused than others when it came to intellectual discussion, and the endorsement of progressive politics.<sup>5</sup> Whether hosted in a more provincial family home, or a cosmopolitan townhouse, Godwin was experiencing how dinner parties were a way in which to meet in small circles where the opportunity could arise for ‘truth’ to be sought calmly and gradually (*PJ*, 242).

Godwin had been introduced to Robinson by way of recommendation from his old Hoxton Dissenting Academy tutor Andrew Kippis. Having helped to re-direct Godwin’s interest in politics, Kippis had suggested to Robinson that Godwin would make a suitable assistant in compiling the *New Annual Register*, a reference work that replaced the failing *Annual Register* which provided a *View of the History, Politicks and Literature* of each year of publication. In terms of the politics of dissent, St Clair notes the shrewdness behind

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> For example, on 22 April 1796 Godwin records: ‘Dinner, 3 Parrs, 4 Mackintoshs, Inchbald, Imlay, Dealtry and H[olcroft],’ but he does not mention any topics discussed. In contrast, on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1794 Godwin writes: ‘dine at Mackintosh’s, w. Parr, Tweddel, Losh, Hall, Moore, Robinson, Johnson, Bell & Miss Christie, talk of passions.’ *GD*. Also, see the topics discussed at a meal with Paine, Wollstonecraft and others, p. 59.

this substitution: by instilling the word *New*, dissenters ‘seized a share of the market so effectively that many added the *New Annual Register* to their bound runs of the *Annual Register* without noticing the discontinuity. The intellectual and progressive wing of politics now had their own alternative record of contemporary events.’<sup>6</sup> As Godwin’s diary demonstrates, this same ‘intellectual and progressive wing of politics’ also kept active through hospitable means, perhaps most notably at dinner parties like those hosted by Robinson. The first meal recorded at Robinson’s took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> April 1788 when Kippis, Holcroft and Godwin were present. Godwin and Kippis were often together and associated with many dissenting figures at dinners hosted by reformer Timothy Hollis, and fellow-reformer and founder member of the Society for Constitutional Information Thomas Brand Hollis.<sup>7</sup> Although Godwin had been introduced to Robinson, and it may be assumed other significant dissenters, and friends of reform such as Hollis, and Brand Hollis, the friendships he established at Robinson’s became more diverse still and were instrumental in helping him to forge a politics more his own.

Through Robinson, and more particularly the dinner parties hosted by Robinson, society was opened up to Godwin. This important means of sociability provided a setting in which influential, and life-long friendships were formed. It does not seem unreasonable to surmise that ‘the freedom of social communication’ and its importance, as laid out by Godwin in *Political Justice*, is in fact drawn from experience (*PJ*, 118). At these dinners names are actually given to a ‘number of individuals’ who after ‘reading and reflection’, would compare, discuss and debate through ‘unreserved conversation’ (*PJ*, 118). Marshall records that Godwin ‘became a regular member of the literary parties of the publisher George Robinson, where he saw Thomas Warton, the poet, James Heath, the engraver, and James Perry

---

<sup>6</sup> St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> See *GD*.

and William Woodfall, the newspaper editors. He also met Thomas Holcroft, the playwright, William Nicholson, the scientist, and William Shield, the composer, all of whom became close friends.’<sup>8</sup> Although Godwin’s dissenting academy background had helped to instil a sense of the merit of friendship, as demonstrated in his manuscript ‘Notes on Friendship,’ the influence of his friends Holcroft and Nicholson, and the belief and friendship of his publisher would prove greater still, for each man contributed to the composition of Godwin’s philosophical treatise *Political Justice*.<sup>9</sup>

The dinners hosted by Robinson, recorded in Godwin’s diary, provide evidence of Godwin’s widening acquaintance and persons of significance and bearing at particular points in his life. For example, on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1796 Godwin, Elizabeth Inchbald, Robert Merry, Alexander Chalmers, Thomas Holcroft, and Thomas Cooper dined together at Robinson’s.<sup>10</sup> The diary also serves as proof of the longevity of this mode of sociability: given Robinson’s own political leaning and the notable names that surrounded him and partook of his hospitality this was no mean feat during the repressive nineties.<sup>11</sup> In defiance of government’s attempts at suppression, and the infiltration of spies and informers, the meals took on greater political significance

---

<sup>8</sup> Marshall, *William Godwin*, p. 71.

<sup>9</sup> See St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 62, for a brief example, taken from Godwin’s journal, of the process of the composition of *Political Justice* through reading, drafting, and discussion with friends. St Clair also notes that Godwin had drafted a Preface for *Political Justice* ‘explaining the origin and purpose of the book and noting his thanks to Holcroft and Nicholson, but on 7 January 1793, at the moment when the extent of Government’s intentions was becoming clear, he prepared a redraft and it was this version that was published.’ Ibid, p. 67. Holcroft and Nicholson are not mentioned, which seems to signal Godwin’s desire to protect his friends.

<sup>10</sup> Cooper was Godwin’s cousin and charge. He received tutelage from both Godwin and Holcroft, and became an actor who achieved much success in America. See *GD*.

<sup>11</sup> JoEllen DeLucia writes regarding Robinson: ‘Despite his commercial savvy, he was not afraid to use his business as a platform for his radical politics. In 1793, he was punished for selling Thomas Paine’s *The Rights of Man* and, in 1796, boldly filed a petition on behalf of himself and a number of other booksellers to recover the fines they suffered.’ Jo Ellen DeLucia, ‘Radcliffe, George Robinson and Eighteenth-Century Print Culture: Beyond the Circulating Library,’ *Women’s Writing*, 22.3 (2015), 287-299, <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09699082.2015.1037981>>. In terms of longevity the final meal Godwin records as having at Robinson’s was on the 18<sup>th</sup> February 1801 and includes the unidentified ‘Crutwel.’ *GD*.

and, true to the principles of *Political Justice*, ensured the continuation of ‘the freedom of social communication’ (*PJ*, 118).

On 20<sup>th</sup> May 1800 Robinson and Godwin joined a party who dined at Joseph Johnson’s, that ‘friendly rival’ of Robinson’s. Like Robinson, Johnson had firm connections with dissent and his dinners were attended by the noteworthy.<sup>12</sup> Godwin’s *Considerations* was published by Johnson in 1795, and although Godwin and Holcroft had long been on sociable terms with Johnson, Godwin’s friendship with him developed because of Mary Wollstonecraft. Johnson’s kind nature shone through his treatment of Wollstonecraft as her considerate publisher and compassionate friend, and his concern turned towards Godwin following Wollstonecraft’s tragic, and premature death.<sup>13</sup> When it would come time to write an obituary for this publisher and friend, Godwin could not fail to bear witness to the benevolent nature of the man, and to note the significance of his hospitality.

### **Dinners at Johnson’s**

There is perhaps no greater indication of the importance Godwin placed on modes of sociability, and more particularly the dinner party, than the words he chose to honour his friend Joseph Johnson with. Following Johnson’s death, Godwin wrote an obituary notice for the *Morning Chronicle* in which he remarks that Johnson

was on all occasions ready to apply his time and his thoughts for the benefit of others; and ... was the perpetual resort of his connections in seasons of difficulty and embarrassment ... His table was frequented through successive years by a succession of persons of the greatest talents, learning, and genius; and the

---

<sup>12</sup> Johnson published works by Kippis, and David Jennings, also a tutor at Hoxton.

<sup>13</sup> St Clair notes that after Wollstonecraft’s death, ‘her friends Joseph Johnson and Hugh Skeys did as much as they could.’ *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 191.

writer of these lines can cheerfully bear witness that all were delighted when he took his share in the conversation, and only regretted that the gentleness and modesty of his nature led him to do it so rarely.<sup>14</sup>

The dinners appear to have become legendary: large numbers attended each one and looked forward to the enjoyment and intellectual stimulation such an occasion provided. However, Godwin reveals that Johnson was unlikely to partake in the collision of disagreeing accounts, instigated in *Political Justice*; rather, as host, Johnson seems to have sat unassumingly as respected moderator as his guests led and partook in matters of debate or general conversation. However, as Braithwaite argues, Johnson's belief in the 'freedom of social communication' was as strong as Godwin's; she writes that 'Johnson's affiliations with authors were occasionally more diverse and complex than has often been suggested and that, if they owe anything at all to 'radicalism' it is to the 'radical' philosophical tenets of free (even if unpalatable) enquiry rather than any form of unquestioning adherence to the virtues of popular politics.'<sup>15</sup> Godwin's first meeting with Wollstonecraft, in 1791, at a dinner at Johnson's has been well-documented, where, keen to hear and converse with Thomas Paine, Godwin was frustrated when conversation between himself and Wollstonecraft dominated. His recollections record their discussing 'a variety of topics and, particularly the characters and habits of certain eminent men.'<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Braithwaite, *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent*, p. 350.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 123.

<sup>16</sup> Godwin would later recall: 'I had therefore little curiosity to see Mrs Wollstonecraft, and a very great curiosity to see Thomas Paine. Paine, in his general habits, is no great talker; and, though he threw in occasionally some shrewd and striking remarks, the conversation lay principally between me and Mary. I, of consequence, heard her very frequently when I wished to hear Paine.' William Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. by Richard Holmes (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 236, also quoted in St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 64. His diary entry confirms that they talked of 'monarchy, Tooke, Johnson, Voltaire, and pursuits of religion,' *GD*.



Although the meeting did not go well, subsequent meetings at tea parties would eventually lead to romance and Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's marriage. The dinner parties hosted by their mutual friend Johnson had also proved the means of meeting a prospective spouse.

Braithwaite notes that Godwin did not really become part of the Johnson circle until the late 1790s, when 'his friendship with Johnson developed in earnest after Wollstonecraft's death when the two took to dining in each other's company almost monthly.'<sup>17</sup> Godwin writes from experience in Johnson's obituary of his friend's being 'the resort of his connections in seasons of difficulty and embarrassment,' for it was Johnson who advised Godwin not to be too explicit in the *Memoirs* of Wollstonecraft, but whose friendship never wavered in the hostile aftermath of its publication. Johnson also helped Godwin financially, and was a continuous means of support and advice when Godwin and his second wife Mary Jane set up their publishing business in Skinner Street, Holborn.<sup>18</sup>

As Godwin also records in the obituary, many of notoriety and talent sat at table at Johnson's, as well as Godwin, and Wollstonecraft; Mary Hays, Henry Fuseli, Humphry Davy, Robert Southey, John Thelwall, Anna Letitia and Rochemont Barbauld, Richard Phillips, and John Horne Tooke amongst others. However, Godwin's diary further reveals the closeness of his and Johnson's friendship as it demonstrates that Johnson attended meals with those intimate to Godwin. For example: on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1795 Godwin and Johnson formed part of a party of five at Holcroft's; on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1797 Johnson dined at Godwin's with his sister Hannah Godwin, and close friend from Hoxton Dissenting Academy days, James Marshall; whilst on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1797 Marshall, Fanny Imlay, Holcroft and Johnson all met

---

<sup>17</sup> Braithwaite, *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent*, p. 142.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 154.

at Godwin's around dinner time. Seen in this light, the dinner party (like those at Robinson's villa) could act as an extension of family. Also, as with Robinson's, the longevity of Johnson's dinners is notable. Godwin continued to dine with him, and prominent others, until the year of Johnson's death, 1809.<sup>19</sup> When Johnson was imprisoned in 1798 for publishing a seditious pamphlet he continued to host dinners from his rooms in the King's Bench Prison.<sup>20</sup> Braithwaite makes reference to 'the remnants of Johnson's circle,' after the repression of the 1790s, and whilst it would be futile to claim that the climate of fear and suppression that came to dominate that decade had not taken its toll, what does appear often to be overlooked is the determination of those who remained true to the idea, or right, of 'the freedom of social communication' (*PJ*, 118).

### **Booksellers**

The shops of successful booksellers were also significant sociable hubs and provided a place in which friends could meet to discuss news, politics, and the latest literary works and endeavours. St Clair records that:

The shops of the booksellers were centres of literary life. Politicians and men of fashion would call in to meet friends and pick up the latest books, pamphlets, and reviews. Authors and prospective authors were welcome to hang about in search of ideas, gossip, introductions, contracts and invitations. Robinson's reputation as a six-bottle man referred to the amount of wine he provided on his dining table. Johnson would introduce himself to strangers with the news that he dined at

---

<sup>19</sup> Note two significant losses for Godwin that year: Holcroft died 23 March 1809; Johnson died 20 December 1809. See *GD*.

<sup>20</sup> See St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, pp. 189-90.

four o'clock. The booksellers' shops were the unofficial forerunners of the gentlemen's club which were to become such a feature of London life in the following century.<sup>21</sup>

Towards the end of the 1790s Godwin and Holcroft enjoyed frequent visits to publisher and printer John Debrett's establishment.<sup>22</sup> The *ODNB* notes that Debrett's shop at 178 Piccadilly was 'much frequented about the middle of the day by fashionable people, and ... used as a lounging place for political and literary conversation', especially by those with Whiggish sympathies, while those who supported Pitt would visit the neighbouring shop belonging to John Stockdale.<sup>23</sup> Godwin's diary makes thirty-six mentions of Debrett's during the years 1795-7, beginning with a succession of calls made alongside George Robinson.<sup>24</sup> Holcroft's diary records daily visits to Debrett's and his entries breathe life into the observations above,<sup>25</sup> for example, on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1798 Holcroft writes:

Met Sir L[ionel] C[opley] at Debrett's, and spoke to him to recommend N[icholson]'s academy. Was pleased with Pulteney's speech against the Income Bill. Mr. G[eorge] Dyer drank tea with us, and told me of poems well written by Lord Holland. Imitations of 'Juvenal,' one of them called 'Secession,'

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> St Clair records: 'John Debrett of Piccadilly discovered an unfailingly profitable market supplying genealogies to the aristocracy and the gentry.' *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> *ODNB*, quoting from *The Picture of London* (1802).

<sup>24</sup> The editors of Godwin's diary further note: 'The first mention in the diary are in a series of calls, alongside George Robinson and James Perry, in Nov 1795. After that all references are to his premises, 36 in total, 1795-7. According to the *ODNB*, Debrett set up shop at John Almon's former business at 178 Piccadilly, London, in 1791, and hence inherited some of Almon's Whig patrons. The identification has been confirmed through matching dates and the long lists of people whom Godwin recorded meeting at Debrett's.' *GD*.

<sup>25</sup> Godwin's diary, by contrast, and by way of example records on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1796: 'Debrett's; Lauderdale, Barry, Armstrong & Ht [Holcroft]; and, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1797: 'Debrett's; Weld, Bosville, Perry & Ht.' *GD*. Note: Godwin's diary indicates that Holcroft's visits to Debrett's began earlier, as he notes Holcroft's attendance in 1796-7. *GD*.

in praise of his uncle, Charles Fox. B. asserted two people had perished by the frost in the prison, nick-named the Bastille. Sir L. C. agreed with me in disapproving Tierney's motion against the editor of the 'Times'.<sup>26</sup>

Holcroft's diary demonstrates that matters as diverse as the alleged assassination of Buonaparte, the Orangemen and rebellion in Ireland, the poetry of Lord Holland, and even the 'tricks of Smithfield salesmen' were discussed. Given that these are all Whig causes or people signifies that there is personal advancement and ideological reinforcement to be gained by mixing there: a poor man of letters might come to the attention of a great magnate such as Fox.

As a mode of sociability, the meetings that occurred at booksellers appear, for the most part, to be chance gatherings rather than fixed engagements. The *ODNB*'s observation that this was a 'lounging place for political and literary conversation' creates the impression of a relaxed form of political debate. Godwin's model of sociability was inflected by his experience of these occasions, their influence is suggested by the chapter of *Political Justice* entitled 'Of Political Associations', where Godwin writes:

It follows that the promising of the best interests of mankind eminently depends upon the freedom of social communication.

---

<sup>26</sup> Holcroft, *Memoirs*, p. 243. It seems most likely that Holcroft refers to Foxite Whig, Sir Lionel Copley. In 1759, Lady Holland thought Copley: 'As usual, Jacobinical and tiresome,' but also noted, 'Sir. L. has been kind and friendly; though he is rough and selfish, he is capable of doing good-hearted actions.' 'Copley, Sir Lionel, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bt. (c. 1767-1806), of Sprotborough, Yorks. And Bake, Cornw.' in, *History of Parliament*, <[www.historyofparliament.org/volume/1790-1820/member/Copley-sir-lionel-1767-1806](http://www.historyofparliament.org/volume/1790-1820/member/Copley-sir-lionel-1767-1806)>, quoting, 'Journal of Lady Holland,' i, 232,257; Add.47574, f.8. In 1799 (the year after Holcroft's diary entry) William Nicholson set up a school in Soho, it is therefore credible that this was the academy he refers to. 'Nicholson, William,' in, *ODNB*; also see, William Nicholson Junior, *The Life of William Nicholson 1753-1815: A Memoir of Enlightenment Commerce, Politics, Arts and Science*, ed. by Sue Durrell afterword by Frank A.J.L. James (London: Peter Owen, 2017), pp. 84-6.

Let us imagine to ourselves a number of individuals, who, having first stored their minds with reading and reflection, proceed afterwards in candid and unreserved conversation to compare their ideas, to suggest their doubts, to remove their difficulties, and to cultivate a collected and striking manner for delivering their sentiments. Let us suppose these men, prepared by mutual intercourse, to go forth to the world, to explain with succinctness and simplicity, and in a manner well calculated to arrest attention, the true principles of society. Let us suppose their hearers instigated in their turn to repeat these truths to their companions. We shall then have an idea of knowledge as perpetually gaining ground, unaccompanied with peril in the means of its diffusion (*PJ*, 118-9).

The fact that the shop would often have had other visitors may, in a small way, have ensured that principles would be overheard, and that ‘hearers’ might be ‘instigated in their turn to repeat these truths to their companions.’ Debrett’s is evidence of a gathering place in which men of intellect and reason have time to prepare, ‘to cultivate a collected and striking manner for delivering their sentiments,’ before truths can be carried coherently and persuasively to society more widely.

### **Business Distinct from Pleasure?**

Both Godwin’s and Holcroft’s diary note when they ‘call on Robinson’ for one-to-one meetings.<sup>27</sup> Godwin does not tend to elaborate, but the visits appear to be made during the day-time, and the fact that they are one-to-one meetings would seem to indicate that they are often of a business nature. Similarly, Holcroft differentiates

---

<sup>27</sup> This term is taken from Godwin’s diary, and can show either Godwin calling on Robinson, or Robinson calling on Godwin. *GD*.

between these one-to-one daytime meetings and dinner with Robinson. In one particular entry Holcroft distinguishes that it is to Robinson's London residence in Paternoster Row, rather than the bookshop, that he goes to discuss business with his publisher. Holcroft records: 'went to Paternoster-row; conferred with Robinson on publishing "The Inquisitor." He promised to consider the proposals I had made concerning the sale of the whole of my copyrights.'<sup>28</sup> This compartmentalising is noteworthy as it signals a way in which their business workings and relationship could be treated separately. Holcroft's diary further supports this when he writes that on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October, of the same year, he '[d]ined with Robinson. Thursday Robinson and myself are to exchange acquaintances.' This perhaps meant that they were each to introduce to the other a personal friend, or acquaintance; Holcroft would introduce one of his friends to Robinson and vice versa. The entry is interesting as his dining with Robinson requires no further explanation, but their exchanging acquaintance is treated as separate business to be conducted at a more opportune moment; the entry Holcroft makes for the Thursday in question substantiates this as he records that 'Robinson did not keep his *appointment*' [emphasis my own].<sup>29</sup>

In *The Reading Nation*, St Clair comments on the hard-headed business acumen of publishers, including Robinson, when he writes 'Constable, Robinson, Tegg, Lackington, Whittaker, and other publishers and booksellers were known for their ostentatious lifestyle which contrasted sharply with that of most of their authors, but which

---

<sup>28</sup> Holcroft, diary entry dated 26<sup>th</sup> June, 1798, *Memoirs*, p. 193. St Clair records that it was 'usual practice for the bookseller to buy the copyright outright therefore authors did not share in the profits.' *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 19. The remaining records from Robinson's publishing house, held at Manchester City Library, give an indication of how Robinson generously supported Godwin's work: they include the copyright for Godwin's *Political Justice* for which Robinson paid £700; and numerous 'accounts' for the *New Annual Register* which provided Godwin with a steady income. For a detailed list of the Manchester archive's contents, see G. E. Bentley, Jr., 'Copyright Documents in the George Robinson Archive: William Godwin and Others 1713-1820,' *Studies in Bibliography*, 35 (1982), 67-110.

<sup>29</sup> Holcroft, *Memoirs*, p. 223.

helped to maintain the illusion that they were credit-worthy. As owner/managers in a booming industry, they were media moguls, inclined to pay themselves large salaries, to borrow heavily, to understate their net profits, to distribute cash surpluses immediately to themselves, and to complain that trade was bad.<sup>30</sup> Genial dinners, when viewed from a cold business perspective, could indeed send out a message of success and of being credit-worthy, but from a prospect of sociability they incorporated and meant much more. New literary projects could emerge from social intercourse, and, as with dissenting academies, through collaboration mutual concerns could be defined and spread.<sup>31</sup> Importantly, such gatherings also served to enhance and encourage individual progression. Further than this, dinner parties enabled men and women to socialise in an equal setting and allowed them to converse more freely than other modes of sociability, and rules of decorum and polite conduct permitted. Whether or not elements of Robinson's or Johnson's business conduct were morally questionable, good business sense, paired with a naturally affable character, seemed for both men to incorporate an understanding of the importance of sociability. They each worked on a principle of hospitality and considered the well-being of their authors.

### **Utilising Tea Parties**

A further mode of sociability was the tea party, and Godwin's diary discloses its importance. There are five hundred and eighty eight entries for 'tea' in the diary; Holcroft took tea at Godwin's seventy-five times, Godwin took tea with Holcroft a further sixty-one times.

---

<sup>30</sup> William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 171.

<sup>31</sup> Whitehouse notes, concerning the academies that, 'the emphasis on the relational nature of textual production is a powerful one,' she continues, 'the very ideas for books and their writing (as well as the publishing, marketing, distribution, and use) often developed collectively and out of conversation, epistolary exchange, the accumulation of teaching materials, and the modification of old books.' *Textual Culture*, p. 7.

Sometimes only the two of them were present, but, on other occasions, the tea parties they attended were made up of larger numbers of people and took place at differing venues. For example, on 21 December 1789 Godwin records having tea at Helen Maria Williams's: '[t]ea miss Williams's: with Aboyne, Holcroft & mrs Barwel.' Taking tea could also form part of a visit to bookseller's shops; this is particularly noticeable in Holcroft's diary and the entries he makes for Debrett's.<sup>32</sup> When serious matters were the topics of discussion, the tea party realised Godwin's ideal of developing the 'leisure of a cultivated understanding': incorporated in the system of read, reflect, converse, in small circles, advocated in *Political Justice*.<sup>33</sup>

A letter from Mary Hays to Godwin best demonstrates how, when serious matters were the topic of discussion, the system of read, reflect, converse, in small circles, was practised at tea parties. In *Political Justice* Godwin had written 'if there be such a thing as truth, it must infallibly be struck out by the collision of mind with mind' (*PJ*, 21). As Jon Mee acknowledges, Godwin provided 'an explicitly political role for conversation,' and, 'made it a key engine for *Political Justice*.'<sup>34</sup> Anticipating the 'collision of mind with mind,' Hays writes:

May I hope, ere long, you will drink tea, or spend an hour or two some evening, with me? Your conversation, beside the hope of improvement, is to me an intellectual entertainment. I find so much finesse, so much bigotry, so many prejudices, & so much trifling, in society, so much, in short, of everything that is

---

<sup>32</sup> As a further demonstration of the frequency of drinking tea, Holcroft makes a note of his refraining from taking tea when he writes that on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1798: 'drank no tea, yet had another restless night, little better than the last.' Holcroft, *Memoirs*, p. 206.

<sup>33</sup> Godwin writes: 'the leisure of a cultivated understanding is the precise period in which great designs are conceived' (*PJ*, 434).

<sup>34</sup> Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, p. 143.



artificial that I enjoy a calm, cool, philosophic investigation. I will say, with Madame Roland, I have no objection to Atheists, for at least they are reasoners [...] An ingenious young man of my acquaintance solicits to accompany me, but then, it seems, we must take a Sunday morn<sup>g</sup>. Since you will not reply to my letters, in writing, I think you shou'd bring them with you, for I sometimes forget their contents, &, after you have left me, always recollect something unsaid on which I wished to hear your opinion.<sup>35</sup>

A disciple of *Political Justice*, Hays goes as far as to incorporate shared reading at the event, but as her letters also demonstrate she was unwilling to agree with Godwin on everything and willingly executed the collision of mind with mind. She gives a clear account of how certain tea parties had become philosophical and political arenas, particularly those including Godwin, and, on occasion Holcroft. Further demonstrating that she had 'no objection to Atheists,' Hays requested that Godwin bring Holcroft to visit her, 'to drink tea,' and the letters reveal how Holcroft, like Godwin, assumed a mentor-type role when discussing serious issues with her.<sup>36</sup> For both Godwin and Holcroft the tea party formed part of a course of debate and education that having been stimulated by reading, also involved writing — in the follow-up of letters — as well as conversation. Consequently, writing and reading, 'philosophy' or politics occurred out of and in a social setting, rather than solitude. This was also important for Godwin's model of writing as extending sociability to readers as if they were known, or, a present, social, audience. Again, Hays captured such principles and exercised them; writing to Godwin after his and

---

<sup>35</sup> Mary Hays, 'Mary Hays to William Godwin, November 5 1795' in, *The Correspondence*, p. 407.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 'November 20<sup>th</sup> 1795,' p. 413. Godwin's courteous reply demonstrates a due sense of decorum: 'Mr. Godwin & Mr. Holcroft will do themselves the pleasure of drinking tea with Miss Hayes on Friday, if convenient. If no answer be returned to this note, it will be considered as an affirmation.' 'November 24<sup>th</sup> 1795,' Ibid.

Holcroft's visit she states: '[h]ow are our faculties to be improved if we do not exercise them? It is by first hazarding wrong judgements, that we, at length, acquire the capacity of forming right ones. You may, if you please, read to your friend what I have written, & tell him, I shall be glad to converse with him, in future on this, or on any other subject.'<sup>37</sup> Hays subsequently developed a friendship with Holcroft and his daughter Louisa, but one letter to Godwin reveals how she felt uncomfortable at a dinner party at Holcroft's, due to the largeness of the party. Hays writes, 'you accused me, of not seeming to participate in the hilarity of the circle, on Sunday, shall I own, the party was too large for me.'<sup>38</sup> Keen to show that she was not idle, but rather employing another key Godwinian principle, Hays continues 'I did not feel at ease, & beside, my attention was occupied by observing them individually.'

Like dinner parties, the numbers at tea parties could vary. Mostly, as the examples quoted show, they were small gatherings of between two, to four or five people. However, there is evidence that Godwin, and Holcroft hosted tea parties of up to nine and eleven people, although these were unusual.<sup>39</sup> Searching tea parties, like dinner parties, in Godwin's diary gives a true sense of the size of both his, and Holcroft's acquaintance. Changes in grouping was a means of forming new acquaintances and gathering and sharing varying opinions, but as Hays shows, these were also ideal venues in which to quietly observe 'different men and things.'<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Hays continues: 'I thank you, very sincerely, for your introduction to Mr Holcroft, & shall feel myself mortified if our conversation afforded him no degree of incitement to repeat his visit. — I love mental stimulus, & I seek a commerce with those who are capable of affording it.' Ibid, p. 415.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 420. Godwin's diary shows that the dinner was held at Holcroft's on 27<sup>th</sup> December 1795: 'dine at Ht's, w. Perry, Gray, col Barry, Kentish, T, C, M Hayes, & E M.' *GD*.

<sup>39</sup> For example: on 22 April 1795, 'tea Ht's, w. Shield, King, Foulkes, Parker, Shuter, Smith, Batty, Firth & A Alderson; 7 May 1802, 'Fiévées, Theodore, Lambs, Fells, & Fenwicks at tea' at Godwin's. *GD*.

<sup>40</sup> In *Political Justice* Godwin writes of the importance of the 'first hand observations of men and things' (*PJ*, 209).

Determined to utilise the tea party as an effective means of open communication, Godwin makes a point of recording when serious issues are discussed: one such example of this is on 12 November 1791 when he records, ‘Dyson & Dibbin cal at tea; talk of property, politics, religion & immortality.’<sup>41</sup> Recently, Mee has noticed that the word ‘tea,’ as recorded in Godwin’s diary, ‘needs careful treatment.’ He writes:

The evidence of the diary is that [tea] may simply be Godwin’s general word for any modest repast served in the home (in late afternoon). In the diary, it is often used for meetings that included the consideration of weighty philosophical questions (often in mixed company), and need not imply politeness in a way that militated against the vigorous discussion of political issues. Take, for instance, the ‘tea’ at ‘Barbould’s w. Belsham, Carr, Shiel, Notcut & Aikin jr’, on 29 October 1795 where Godwin and his friends ‘talk of self-delusion & gen-principles’ [...] these occasions seem to have allowed for the collision of mind with mind, to some degree at least, within the home, even if not within strictly ‘domestic’ circumstances.<sup>42</sup>

For the most part, the collision of mind with mind carried out at tea parties does seem to have been conducted within the boundaries of decorum. However, Godwin does note instances where passions appear to be raised. He uses the term *démêlé*, meaning dispute, to indicate when a certain topic caused argument, or disagreement which does signal that on occasion tea, as an event, could be fraught rather than fair. For example, on 13 September 1791 Godwin has written,

---

<sup>41</sup> Further examples are: on 21 September 1792, ‘Holcroft at tea, talk of Utopia’; also, 22 August 1793, ‘Thelwal at tea, talk of intellectual progress & matter.’ *GD*.

<sup>42</sup> Jon Mee, *Print, Publicity and Radicalism in the 1790s: The Laurel of Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 44.

‘Tea at Nicholson’s with Holcroft, leur démêlé; Libels, orig. Contract.’<sup>43</sup> In Godwin’s model of sociability there has to be room for dispute, and Godwin, and Holcroft may be seen as remodelling the tea party to include ‘weighty philosophical questions’ which could incorporate intense debate.

In the metropolis tea parties had become an important form of socialising amongst the middle ranks of society and, as has been shown, often the topics of conversation were of a political and/or philosophical nature. Frequently, parties were made up of both sexes and the presence of women challenges, however slightly, notions of Godwin’s or Holcroft’s preference for homosocial gatherings; but, notably, what has often been taken as a feminine form of hospitality is also proven to be just as popular amongst all male gatherings. Nonetheless, the tea party remained an important mode of sociability for women, as empowered in their position as hostesses, and it was also an approved means for opposite sexes to meet. In *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, Amanda Vickery reveals how genteel ladies took great care when selecting china, silverware, and tea trays in order to maintain the right image.<sup>44</sup> Observing that tea parties were an important custom, she also notes the connection that is often made between tea drinking, politeness, and femininity:

It has been argued that the ritual performance of tea-drinking constituted one of the key expressions of ornamental femininity,

---

<sup>43</sup> *GD*.

<sup>44</sup> Vickery writes of the ‘pleasure derived from exquisite tableware, the devotion to tea parties, and the enjoyment in examining neighbours new purchases’ amongst certain genteel Lancashire ladies. This, Vickery notes, ‘probably reflects female investment in mealtime ceremony and domestic sociability.’ However, she also acknowledges that: ‘Certainly, the genteel liked to buy their tableware in London, but there is no evidence that they burned to drink their tea from the same cups as a duchess. They were satisfied with ‘genteel’ tableware and flattered themselves that they were too sensible to be buffeted by the ever-changing winds of metropolitan taste.’ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 169.

and that the tea table was the ‘place where the upper-class female body was disciplined to participate in a narcissistic display of availability.’ Undoubtedly, tea-drinking was a *sine qua non* of ladylike sociability, whereby gentlewomen showed off their manners and porcelain, but it was also the forum for business dealings in the widest possible sense.<sup>45</sup>

Recording the necessity of tea parties in ladylike affairs, Vickery also signals that, certainly amongst those of provincial establishment, the tea party was broadening to take on greater meaning. She further records that ‘[t]ea parties were not in themselves an exclusively female affair,’ they could involve, ‘anyone from the Justice of the Peace to the mantua-maker.’<sup>46</sup> This is an important finding as it indicates foundations on which tea parties, or taking tea amongst the metropolis’s middle ranks of society had developed and become an important means of socialising amongst mixed genders, that could include some business dealings, but, which had also progressed as a significant means for exercising political and philosophical debates. Notably, Godwin’s diary shows that twice Godwin took tea with Elizabeth Inchbald, at her home, and that no other person is recorded as being present. Godwin used the tea party to offend propriety by meeting a woman one to one: social boundaries could be pushed to allow a single male and female to meet and converse freely within the grounds of polite custom.

Whether all male gatherings (such as those cited as taking place at Debrett’s in Holcroft’s diary; or demonstrated in this section between Godwin and Holcroft, or Godwin, Dyson, and Dibbin) or meetings which incorporated both sexes, tea parties afforded time in which to develop ‘the leisure of a cultivated understanding,’ which, as

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 208, quoting B. Kowaleski-Wallace.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 207.

Pamela Clemit notes, ‘would foster creativity, sociability, and work for the greater good.’<sup>47</sup> Tea parties formed part of the type of reasoned leisure time advocated by Godwin. They provided the opportunity to gain introductions, and a greater understanding of how different minds work, they were a place in which to exercise and defend principles, carry out business dealings, and observe and better know the opposite sex. They formed an essential part of both Godwin’s, and Holcroft’s day and, true to *Political Justice*, were a model of progress. Godwin’s model of sociability via writing, reading, and conversation, may be seen as having been informed by the tea party practice: where the tea party was an occasion for and extension of reading, the model of reading, in turn, was informed by the tea party.

### **Coffee-House Culture**

Some of the most notable developments to occur in modes of eighteenth-century sociability were due to the formation of coffee-houses. Yet, for Godwin and Holcroft the coffee-house was a place to be avoided, for reasons that cast light on their understanding of the proper nature and limits of sociability.

Following its introduction in London in 1652, visiting a coffee house was viewed as an elite custom; however, by the end of the century — no longer dictated by status — the coffee-house had become an integral part of society.<sup>48</sup> Coffee-houses served many purposes. John Brewer notes that ‘[t]hey were places of pleasure and business, catering to customers from all walks of life, centres of rumour, news and information. In these snug centres of conversation and conviviality, groups of men (and, less usually, women) gathered

---

<sup>47</sup> *PJ*, 434; Pamela Clemit, ‘On William Godwin and the ‘Leisure of a Cultivated Understanding,’ *The Idler*, March (2015), <<http://idler.co.uk/article/a-birthday-tribute-william-godwin-and-the-leisure-of-a-cultivated-understanding/>>.

<sup>48</sup> See Ellis, *The Coffee House*.

to drink, gossip, trade, debate and intrigue.’<sup>49</sup> Within these establishments a mixture of society might be found which, in alignment with an ever-expanding print culture, entered into a new form of political arena and shared discourse. There was an eclectic mix of coffee-houses which included a recognised network of ‘high’ and ‘low’ establishments, but regardless of rank, coffee-house sociability shared discourse that was inspired by politics. Godwin’s diary has only three (relatively late) entries for his seeming to visit a coffee-house, one made when he was away from London, whilst Holcroft’s memoirs make no mention of his visiting coffee-houses.<sup>50</sup> Importantly, tracing the growth of the eighteenth century coffee-house reveals how, by the 1790s, ultra-radicalism was becoming synonymous with coffee-house culture, thereby suggesting reasons for Godwin and Holcroft’s apparent reluctance to participate in this method of sociable conduct.

Earlier in the century there were attempts to promote the belief that visiting a coffee-house was a polite custom, but, in reality, coffee-houses were already operating at every level of society and were also a means of developing a political, rather than a polite voice. An early example of a ‘high’ establishment is Lloyds Coffee House. Surrounded by gin shops stocked with poor man’s liquor, coffee-houses such as Lloyds operated as centres of business and were places where men of money and status could read, discuss and partake in the stock exchange, matters of insurance and news. Authors of the *Tatler* and *Spectator* newspapers, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, in

---

<sup>49</sup> Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 37.

<sup>50</sup> The diary shows on 23-02-1804: ‘Th. Coach, Golden Cross, C C, w. Jo G : breakfast at Godstone : dine at Lewes, Bear : call on West n : Coffee house ; note to West : write to M J : sleep.’ Also, 17.12.1805: ‘Tu. Call on Wilks, London Coffee house (adv. Davis), T T & Jo G ; adv. miss Clarke : meet Malthus , & mrs Wake.’ *GD*. A manuscript note (included in Godwin’s letters) addressed ‘To [the Proprietor of the Somers Town Coffee House] [22 April 1796] shows Godwin asking to hire various utensils, and purchase ‘2 bottles of white wine’ for a dinner he was hosting. Clemit notes that the party included: Dr Parr and his two daughters, Mr and Mrs Mackintosh, Thomas Holcroft, Mrs. Wollstonecraft, and Mrs. Inchbald.’ *GL* I, 168-9.

acknowledging the stark contrast between gin shops and ‘polite’ coffee-houses, also recognised that sociable instinct was both ‘the first cause and the greatest effect of modern city life.’<sup>51</sup> As Markman Ellis observes, print enabled Steele to mould ‘a new model citizen from the interaction of many different social orders. The coffee-house was exactly the kind of arena where this social mixture and affective mobilisation could occur.’<sup>52</sup> Print became intrinsically bound into the coffee-house framework. Although the lead character of Addison and Steele’s daily paper *The Spectator*, the ghostly ‘Mr Spectator,’ is an observer of all things and promotes the ideal that coffee-house debates will not raise men’s passions, he is also the means of exposing ‘the projector,’ a shabbily dressed schemer who operates unworthily and is therefore diametrically opposed to the refinement of manners normally operative in this new mode of polite conduct.<sup>53</sup> As Ellis further shows, Lewis Theobald was one of the first to dismiss *The Spectator*’s ideal of the ‘polite coffee-house,’ and to note the distinction between the elite coffee-houses selected by Addison and Steele and ‘coffee-houses of less note’ that his own invention *Mr Censor* visited. Theobald writes that in private streets ‘Neighbouring *Mechanicks* meet to learn a little News, and, from their Politicks, to procure an Opinion of their Wisdom.’<sup>54</sup> Written in 1717, Theobald’s findings are important as they establish the existence of ‘high’ and ‘low’ coffee-house establishments, yet demonstrate how the lower ranks of society embraced the notion that this was a place to talk business and politics, thereby participating in the same mode of sociability as the middling and higher orders.

Marilyn Morris has effectively shown how with the expansion of print culture in early Hanoverian England, men of power used print

---

<sup>51</sup> Ellis, *The Coffee House*, p. 189.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, pp. 192-3.

<sup>54</sup> Theobald, *Censor*, II, no. 61, 12 March 1717, pp. 213-16. Quoted in Ellis, *The Coffee House*, p. 196.



to open up ‘the political arena beyond the court to public scrutiny.’<sup>55</sup>

This included men from lower stations in life, such as the ‘Mechanicks’ in Theobold’s findings, who could read pamphlets and newspapers which engaged them in political debates. Theobold cannot help but note that the method by which the mechanics, haberdashers and those ‘Oracles’ amongst them discuss their plebeian politics ‘is different from that with Men of common Reason.’<sup>56</sup> Without order and directive such as were to be found in the ‘high’ establishments selected by Addison and Steele, such coffee-house politicians, Theobold concludes, are an aggravation.<sup>57</sup>

Theobold’s observations are significant as they are an early indication of the radicalism that would develop and become synonymous with 1790s and early nineteenth century coffee-house culture; in a sense, they also anticipate the reasoning behind Godwin and Holcroft’s reluctance to embrace this method of sociability.<sup>58</sup> What would alarm Godwin most about London Corresponding Society meetings was that it had not been deemed necessary that, ‘persons of eminence, distinction, and importance in the country’ should guide, or ‘temper’ the efforts of ‘its leading members,’ who did not fully ‘understand the magnitude of the machine they profess to govern.’<sup>59</sup> Although Holcroft was slightly more inclined to accept organisations and societies, as his memoirs show he did not often find it easy to endorse the methods by which they operated.<sup>60</sup> Both men

---

<sup>55</sup> Marilyn Morris, *Sex, Money and Personal Character in Eighteenth-Century British Politics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 44. Morris further demonstrates how with the rise of print a cult of personality developed. A fine line developed between politics based on policy and politics founded on personal character.

<sup>56</sup> Ellis, *The Coffee House*, p. 197.

<sup>57</sup> One of the establishments referred to by Addison and Steele was Will’s in Covent Garden, where poets and literati met and continued to meet in late eighteenth century London. Brewer, *The Pleasures of Imagination*, p. 39.

<sup>58</sup> Notably, Ellis argues: ‘Even as he was writing his reforming essays, Steele must have been well aware of the coffee-house’s continuing attraction to troublemakers and seditious.’ Ellis, *The Coffee House*, p. 199.

<sup>59</sup> William Godwin, *Considerations on Lord Grenville’s and Mr Pitt’s Bills, Concerning Treasonable and Seditious Practices, and Unlawful Assemblies* in, *PPW II*, 130.

<sup>60</sup> Noted in his memoirs: ‘With respect to the Society for Constitutional Information, of which he had become a member, he did not approve of many of their proceedings, nor was

sought to instil the understanding required to read, enquire, discuss, and consider, thereby calmly awaiting the progress of truth. Plebeian coffee-house politicians, like London Corresponding Society leaders and members, were not being guided by significant men of reason, and their politics and means of conveying them carried similar levels of ignorance and the same risk of becoming inflammatory.

Godwin and Holcroft's apparent caution concerning coffee-house sociability was also probably due to the eclectic mix of coffee-houses, which meant that they were attractive not only to polite society, or men of reason, but also criminals and the marginalised. Such diversity could affect how the coffee-house was perceived. Although there was a recognisable network of coffee-houses including Will's in Covent Garden where poets and literati met and had done so since Dryden's time, and Wright's which was close by where actors chose to meet, there is no indication that Godwin or Holcroft visited either.<sup>61</sup> Even though Will's was connected to literati, Vic Gatrell notes how early on it attracted 'Earls in stars and garters,' 'clergymen in cassocks and bands,' whilst Jonathan Swift wrote drily of '[t]he Wits (as they were called), ... that is to say five or six men, who had writ plays, or at least prologues, or had share in a miscellany' who 'came thither, and entertained one another with their trifling composures, in so important an air, as if they had been the noblest efforts of human nature, or that the fate of kingdoms depended on them.'<sup>62</sup> Will's never seemed able to discard this association and continued to carry a reputation for attracting 'wits.' Of comparable note are the political 'Oracles' amongst Theobald's plebeian coffee-house politicians whose 'substance of their Oration [is] as Foreign

---

he altogether satisfied with the authority they seemed to assume of peremptorily deciding questions by a majority of votes, which he thought could only be decided by reason; but still he conceived that this was not sufficient ground for absenting himself from their meetings.' Holcroft; Hazlitt, *Memoirs*, pp. 158-9.

<sup>61</sup> See Gatrell, *The First Bohemians*, p. 179; Brewer, *The Pleasures of Imagination*, p. 38.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 179, quoting T. B. Macaulay, and Jonathan Swift.

from the Point as it is pompous and affected.<sup>63</sup> Godwin and Holcroft would not wish to be associated with a politics of self which was guilty of ignorance and self-conceit.<sup>64</sup>

Booksellers met at Chapter Coffee House in Paternoster Row; artists congregated at Slaughters Coffee House in St Martins Lane; lawyers assembled at Alice's and Hell Coffee Houses; Tory politicians convened at the Cocoa Tree and Whigs at Arthur's.<sup>65</sup> Listed in such a way the temptation is to view each venue as somehow segregated, operating as an exclusive club which prohibited access to other members of society, but in reality this cannot always have been the case. Visitors and newcomers to London would not necessarily have known of each coffee-house's association, and as the early work of Addison and Steele warned that 'projectors,' shabbily dressed schemers, were at work in reputable establishments. Similarly, in Holcroft's novel *Hugh Trevor*, when Hugh arrives in London for the first time, the coach he is on stops at the Gloucester Coffee-house in Piccadilly. In reality this was the place coaches would leave from for Gloucester and the West Country and therefore must have catered to the different ranks of persons travelling by coach.<sup>66</sup> A gentleman with a 'complaisant temper' strikes up a conversation with Hugh and offers to walk with him to show him the king's nearby palace. As they are walking it occurs to Hugh that the gentleman might be a 'sharper'. His fears are confirmed as moments later he is set upon by two men who rob him, accomplices in the 'sharper's' well-organised crime.<sup>67</sup> Holcroft therefore indicates that the coffee-house is a place in which to be wary. Although written a little earlier than Holcroft's novel, the

---

<sup>63</sup> Ellis, *The Coffee House*, p. 197, quoting Lewis Theobald.

<sup>64</sup> See, by way of example, the discussion on pp. 190-91 of this thesis and how Godwin uses his novel *Fleetwood* to disapprove of new men of letters, whose exaggerated sense of self-importance outweighs their thirst for knowledge.

<sup>65</sup> Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 38.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Holcroft, *The Adventures of Hugh Trevor* (1794-7), ed. by W. M. Verhoeven, *Novels and Selected Plays*, vol. III, fn. 2, p. 452.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87-8.

following remarks by magistrate Sir John Fielding upon the dangerous classes to be found in metropolitan coffee-houses, described as ‘necessary Cautions to all Strangers resorting thereto,’ still stood twenty years later:

A stranger or foreigner should particularly frequent the Coffee-houses in London. These are very numerous in every part of the town; will give him the best insight into the different characters of the people, and the justest notion of the inhabitants in general, of all the houses of public resort these are the least dangerous. Yet, some of these are not entirely free from sharpers. The deceivers of this denomination are generally descended from families of some repute, have had the groundwork of a genteel education, and are capable of making a tolerable appearance. Having been equally profuse of their own substance and character, and learned, by having been undone, the ways of undoing, they lie in wait for those who have more wealth and less knowledge of the town. By joining you in discourse, by admiring what you say, by an officiousness to wait upon you, and to assist you in anything you want to have or know, they insinuate themselves into the company and acquaintance of strangers, whom they watch every opportunity of fleecing.<sup>68</sup>

Fielding’s observations are notable because he records how numerous the coffee-shops are ‘in every part of town,’ and how vital it is that a visitor to London should partake in this particular mode of sociability in order to gain ‘insight into the different characters of the people, and the justest notion of the inhabitants in general.’ Fielding indicates that,

---

<sup>68</sup> Sir John Fielding, *A Brief Description of the Cities of London and Westminster: The Public Buildings, Palaces, Gardens, Squares, &c. with an Alphabetical List of all the Streets within the Bills of Mortality* (London: J. Wilkie, 1776), pp. xxv-vi.

for the most part, a cross section of society is to be found within the metropolis's coffee-houses; he does not take great lengths to list where visitors of a particular rank or 'leaning' should go. His comments do, however, encourage a sense of spectacle, and still issue a warning. The Gloucester Coffee-House, referred to by Holcroft, alongside the 'numerous coffee-houses' Fielding refers to would indicate that there were many 'mainstream' coffee-houses. Although Fielding notes that 'of all the houses of public resort these are the least dangerous,' this mix of orders ran the risk of deteriorating into disorder, something more akin to a coffee-house mob, which would have been reason enough for Godwin and Holcroft to refuse to fully embrace such a mode of sociable practice.

Tied in with the sense of a coffee-house mob were establishments of disrepute. Mid-century, the notorious Covent Garden market-shed 'Tom King's' coffee-house, enterprise of Moll and Tom King, was a known 'nocturnal meeting place of rakes and whores.'<sup>69</sup> 'Tom's,' as it was known, is a reminder that 'uncounted numbers of coffee-houses were little more than brothels or drinking dens.'<sup>70</sup> Such stigma attached to the coffee-house label would also have been reason for Godwin and Holcroft's reserve.<sup>71</sup> Towards the end of the century, Iain McCalman has shown, coffee-houses were more or less exempt from the control of licensing judges, which meant that coffee-house keepers were more inclined than many tavern owners to allow ultra-radical underground groups to host political/debating clubs. McCalman notes that 'coffee-houses began assuming many of the social and recreational functions of alehouses

---

<sup>69</sup> For a detailed account see Gatrell, *The First Bohemians*, pp. 102-113.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p. 178.

<sup>71</sup> In his diary of 1798, Holcroft records how he has been reading James Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. He is no fan of Boswell who he regards as 'pompous, egotist, servile, selfish, and cunning.' In his entry for the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August Holcroft writes disparagingly of man and custom: 'Asked Weld, at Debrett's, if he knew Boswell. He had met him at coffee-houses, &c., where B. used to drink hard and sit late.' Holcroft, *Memoirs*, pp. 212 and 214.

and taverns.’<sup>72</sup> By the 1790s, coffee-house politics were no longer just a matter of personal taste, but had become of enough interest to attract government attention. Once the century had reached its final decade, as James Epstein notes:

The political potency of the ideals of unfettered expression and mutual openness, first expressed through companionability, the right of a man to discourse with his friends, made the coffee-house more significant than ever in the 1790s.<sup>73</sup>

Epstein successfully demonstrates how coffee-houses had become infiltrated by government spies and notes how a site of sociability could swiftly be transformed into “an Inquisition.”<sup>74</sup> Fear of informers gave Godwin and Holcroft another reason to be wary. The diverse mix of coffee-house establishments shared significant strains, they had, from the beginning, attracted the marginalised and were an agreeable place in which to encounter politics. By the end of the decade this had grown to include many who disagreed with government and sought varying degrees of reform: the coffee-house had become a site in which to cite and contest the rights of the freeborn Englishman. Coffee-houses were now places of political activation and suppression. In the ensuing game of cat and mouse ‘radical coffee-house debating clubs were able to evade the government repression of other forms of assembly in 1795-1803 and again in 1819-21, and provided a lasting model of sociability for underground radicals.’<sup>75</sup> The coffee-houses continuing attraction to,

---

<sup>72</sup> Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 195.

<sup>73</sup> James Epstein, “‘Equality and No King’: Sociability and Sedition: The Case of John Frost,” in Russell and Tuite, *Romantic Sociability*, 43-61 (p. 44).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47, quoting Charles Piggott.

<sup>75</sup> Ellis, *The Coffee House*, p. 212.

and growth in association with ultra-radicalism would suggest further reasons for Godwin and Holcroft's reluctance to engage in this particular mode of sociability.

### **Forms of Sociability in Godwin's Writings**

The modes of sociability examined throughout this chapter provided Godwin with the practical experience necessary to carry over in to his philosophical treatise, *Political Justice*. Philp has argued that Godwin's 'daily experience in the social and intellectual circles in which he moved provided a continual confirmation of his faith in private judgment even though these circles expanded and developed and gave him a new philosophical vocabulary with new attendant presuppositions and conventions.'<sup>76</sup> Whilst acknowledging Philp's findings, I have tried to supplement them by discovering exactly who and what those 'social and intellectual circles' and 'daily experiences' incorporated. Here, in conclusion, I attempt to trace how the kinds of sociability encountered at dinner and tea parties informed *Political Justice*. Godwin was able to write of the advantage of 'unreserved communication in a smaller circle' due to the experiences he gained at dinner and tea parties, whilst the reservations he, and Holcroft, harboured about 'noisy assemblies' at certain sites of sociability — notably coffee-houses — also inflect his theoretical work (*PJ*, 118).

Academy tutors, like Kippis, had encouraged free enquiry and debate in their classrooms, but dinner parties signified a cross-over for Godwin as he gradually moved away from that period of his life, entering new social circles at Robinson's, at dinners (both intimate and in large parties) at Holcroft's, his own home, John Horne Tooke's, and Johnson's. *Political Justice* reflects the importance he came to

---

<sup>76</sup> Philp. *Godwin's Political Justice*, pp. 100-1.

attach to such gatherings as a means of creating an equal and just society:

It should be remembered that unreserved communication in a smaller circle, and especially among persons who are already awakened to the pursuit of truth, is of unquestionable advantage. There is at present in the world a cold reserve that keeps man at a distance from man [...] There is a sort of domestic tactics, the object of which is to instruct us to elude curiosity, and to keep up the tenour of conversation, without the disclosure either of our feelings or our opinions [...] No man can have much kindness for his species, who does not habituate himself to consider upon each successive occasion of social intercourse how that occasion may be most beneficently improved. Among the topics to which he will be anxious to awaken attention, politics will occupy a principal share (*PJ*, 118).

In alignment with enduring dissenting academy principles, and with his own model of friendship, Godwin argues the need for sociability over solitude when he notes ‘a cold reserve’ that currently ‘keeps man at a distance from man.’ In his early manuscript ‘Notes on Friendship’, Godwin had written ‘[m]an was not made for himself alone. Solitude deprives us, not only of the conveniences and elegancies, but likewise of many the noblest enjoyments of human life. Among the foremost of these is friendship; an acquisition, the pleasure of which is only equalled by it’s utility.’<sup>77</sup> Even though he had struggled with academy peers, his friendship with Marshall, and that with Kippis, helped Godwin to experience not only the pleasure, but also the usefulness that is to be found in true friendship. Kippis had been influential in helping Godwin to gain his first job as an

---

<sup>77</sup> ‘Notes on Friendship,’ MS Abinger, c. 36, fols. 40-4.



author, and through the same friendship Godwin had been introduced to dinner parties which permitted ‘unreserved communication in a smaller circle, and especially among persons who are already awakened to the pursuit of truth’ (*PJ*, 118). Kippis allows a transformation of the dissenting academy model to a dinner party model; he embodies such movement, as a tutor who exists also beyond the classroom in a social world of discussion of principle.

Godwin experienced exactly how dinner and tea parties presented an appropriate means of radicalising sociable conduct. Eighteenth-century ideals of polite manners were being challenged and broken down — significantly between men and women — at gatherings which encouraged the ‘collision of mind with mind’ over small talk (*PJ*, 21). The Godwin dinner party model is designed to be the opposite to the small talk of polite gatherings in which nobody expresses their true feelings or ideas. Such ‘domestic tactics, the object of which is to instruct us to elude curiosity, and to keep up the tenour of conversation, without the disclosure either of our feelings or our opinions,’ sat in direct contrast to Godwin’s changing social experiences, and, together with Holcroft, Godwin sought to radicalise sociability further by pursuing ‘freedom of social communication’ through frank and honest discourse (*PJ*, 118).

Godwin is careful to outline the advantages of ‘the freedom of social communication,’ and in doing so uses *Political Justice* to illustrate theory meeting practice:

The greatest benefits will result from mutual communication. There is scarcely any man, whose communications will not sometimes enlighten my judgment and rectify my conduct. But the persons to whom it becomes me to pay particular attention in this respect, are not such as may exercise any particular

magistracy, but such, whatever may be their station, as are wiser or better informed in any respect than myself.

There are two ways in which a man wiser than myself may be of use to me; by the communication those arguments by which he is convinced of the truth of the judgments he has formed; and by the communication of the judgments themselves independent of argument. This last is of use only in respect to the narrowness of our own understandings, and the time that might be requisite for the acquisition of a science of which we are at present ignorant (*PJ*, 98).

This passage seems indicative of the method of ‘communication’ Godwin, Holcroft, and Nicholson, shared in the run up to *Political Justice*’s publication. They met frequently for tea, dinner, or supper. For example, on 4 April 1792: ‘[w]rite 1 page. Finish Sceptic. Tea at Nicholson’s with Holcroft, talk of language, alphabet & necessity’; and, 25 December 1792: ‘[w]rite 3 pages. Dine at Holcroft’s. Sup at Nicholson’s, revise Book VIII avec lui.’<sup>78</sup> Where Godwin’s diary is frustratingly sparse and records only the topics discussed, *Political Justice* illustrates the workings of such discourse and presents theory emerging from practice.<sup>79</sup>

Godwin advocates a method of sociable conduct that draws both from the dissenting academy model and from the experience of small scale social gatherings — ‘a distinctive form of sociability with education and friendship at its heart.’<sup>80</sup> *Political Justice* provided the perfect platform in which to blend practice and theory. Drawing from

---

<sup>78</sup> The editors note that Godwin is referring to the number of pages he composed for *Political Justice*. *GD*.

<sup>79</sup> St Clair notes: ‘It was to Nicholson that Godwin turned for information on the latest theories in chemistry, physics, optics, biology, and the other natural sciences, but equally important was his advice on scientific method as such.’ *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 61.

<sup>80</sup> Whitehouse, *Textual Culture*, p. 23.

experience, Godwin can demonstrate how each individual can govern their own time usefully and in a manner, that ensures they will be educated, and educate. The essential equality evident in intimate friendship is broadened to encompass the essential equality of mankind, so that there will be no need for any to ‘exercise any particular magistracy.’ Rather, regardless of ‘station,’ mankind will recognise and seek relevant knowledge from any who are ‘wiser or better informed in any respect than myself.’ Sharing ‘arguments,’ ‘judgments,’ and proof of outcome, or ‘truth,’ will ensure that mankind is in a perpetual state of improvement, without the need for religious establishments, or government institutions (*PJ*, 98). As with the Godwinian model of friendship, when knowledge has been shared, and advice, or arguments, on a particular subject have been given, subsequent individual reflection and reason will raise the receiver to the status of equal, so that regardless of rank or status there is recognition of the moral equality of mankind.

Although Godwin and Holcroft sought to instil a sense of the moral equality of mankind, they also recognised the smallness of circles of intellect. In *Political Justice*, Godwin writes ‘[r]eal intellectual improvement demands that mind should as speedily as possible be advanced to the height of knowledge already existing among the enlightened members of the community, and start from thence in the pursuit of further acquisitions’ (*PJ*, 351). Dinner and tea parties were a means of gathering knowledge through freedom of enquiry, and gave ‘the enlightened members of the community’ time to practice and prepare. They fulfilled Godwin’s belief in meeting in small circles, but they also formed part of his vision of gradual improvement and of branching out in to society more widely. They too were the means of providing ‘a distinctive form of sociability with education and friendship at its heart.’

### Chapter Three: Friendship in Principle, Person, and Word, and the Influence of Thomas Holcroft

I will use this chapter of my thesis to explore Godwin's initial interest in Holcroft, and to ask how Holcroft had got to the point he was at when he and Godwin first met in 1786. Holcroft was eleven years older than Godwin and had worked as a stable-boy, jockey, shoemaker, schoolteacher, and actor, before settling in London in 1777 as a novelist, dramatist, reviewer and translator (around the time that Godwin was finishing his dissenting academy training at Hoxton).<sup>1</sup> They were both pursuing the same trade, but Holcroft was already an example of someone who was self-taught in both life-experience and learning. He had forged strong dissenting acquaintances and now claimed the status of author.

Significantly, Holcroft and Godwin read the philosophes around the same time, and this caused religious doubt in each man. In 1778 Holcroft published his serial narrative *Manthorn, the Enthusiast*, key aspects of which are drawn from experience.<sup>2</sup> I will use the next section of my thesis to examine *Manthorn* and evidence of the depth of Holcroft's scepticism and his progression towards atheism. As his protagonist Manthorn sheds religion he finds a spouting club, 'a society of preachers as equally vociferous and ridiculous' as the Methodists and others of religion he had met.<sup>3</sup> Notably, Holcroft uses his early narrative to expose spouting clubs as an undesirable mode of sociability, so that in *Manthorn*, just as in life, Holcroft may be seen as developing his own sociable model.

Godwin formed a keen interest in theatre, and his introduction to Holcroft, who was both actor and playwright, would have also attracted his attention and assisted his belief in the capacity of theatre

---

<sup>1</sup> Holcroft, *Memoirs*.

<sup>2</sup> *Manthorn, Novels and Selected Plays*.

<sup>3</sup> *Manthorn*, p. 31.

to carry moral and political truths.<sup>4</sup> Holcroft developed a belief in theatre ‘as a site of moral instruction,’ and although *Manthorn* is incomplete he starts a process, the aim of which is to draw attention to theatre as an acceptable site of sociability.<sup>5</sup> It is a place where entertainment becomes a means to educate, in a manner and location that crosses social boundaries; and although Georgian theatre could be a raucous affair, it was still a more regulated environment than other assemblages such as spouting clubs.<sup>6</sup> Marrying theatre and theatrical performance into his narrative, *Manthorn* shows Holcroft using his power of description to convey how performance can both mask and unmask important truths. This relatively unexamined early work gives an important sense of the man Godwin was to meet.<sup>7</sup>

The chapter will move to consider how Holcroft was a crucial link for Godwin. Although Godwin envisaged a process that began with intellectual advantage, his consideration of how such a system could and would filter out into society more broadly has been given less consideration than it should. The influence of Holcroft combined with shared circles of sociability was significant: early on, Holcroft had become part of a small society called the ‘Cannonians’, which

---

<sup>4</sup> David O’Shaughnessy notes: ‘Godwin’s fiction, diary and letters provide ample and incontrovertible evidence that attending the theatre and writing drama were central preoccupations for him from before his arrival in London through to the performance of *Faulkner* in 1807.’ ‘The army officer and spy Alexander Jardine once said of Godwin and his close friend Thomas Holcroft that they had their “heads full of plays & novels, & then thought [themselves] philosophers.”’ O’Shaughnessy, *William Godwin and the Theatre*, p. 21 and p. 5, quoting from MS Abinger, e. 33, fols. 1-24. O’Shaughnessy observes that by the 1790s: ‘the theatre offered much to Godwin,’ and that he was, ‘well aware that there was no cultural platform with a greater public reach for the dissemination of literary, political and philosophical ideas in contemporary Britain.’ Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Quoting O’Shaughnessy, ‘Introduction’, *The Plays of William Godwin*, ed. by David O’Shaughnessy (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2010), p. xv.

<sup>6</sup> For an informative account of the regulation of theatres see David Worrall, *Theatrical Revolution: Drama, Censorship, and Romantic Subcultures 1773-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and for theatre as a site that crossed social divides, David Worrall, *Celebrity, Performance, Reception: British Georgian Theatre as Social Assemblage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> See also Rick Incorvati, ‘Developmental Stages: Thomas Holcroft’s Early Fiction, Elocutionary Rhetoric, and the Function of the Theater in the Progress of Character,’ in Wallace and Markley, *Re-Viewing Thomas Holcroft*, pp. 17-30.

Godwin subsequently joined. Holcroft's background, self-learning, and thirst for the education of the lower orders was great and is evident in the gradual introduction of small gatherings of Godwin's model.

Finally, the chapter will move to consider Godwin's novel *Caleb Williams*. Holcroft was instrumental in demonstrating how politics could be conveyed through fiction in the forms of drama and the political novel. Inspired, Godwin sought to deliver a more overtly political novel form that moved away from Romance narratives, which Holcroft argued served 'no other purpose than to amuse.'<sup>8</sup> Godwin then took up Holcroft's impetus in his own fiction, writing into the form a model of politically inflected friendship. I will investigate this model in detail as it features in Godwin's most powerful and thought-provoking novel, *Caleb Williams* (1794). Through Caleb's isolated state Godwin accentuates the crucial principle that man is a sociable being. Society, and more particularly systems of government fail Caleb, and he is shaped by external circumstance. Caleb is drawn to the drama and spectacle surrounding his employer Ferdinand Falkland and develops an unhealthy curiosity in his quest to unveil Falkland's secret. Falkland had the misfortune to lose an intimate friend, the poet Clare, who had he lived, could have offered the disinterested and 'salutary advice' of a true Godwinian friend: being the most probable means of helping Falkland to curb his rash behaviour that resulted in murder.<sup>9</sup> Caleb's curiosity tragically prevents his own disinterested friendship with Falkland and he is forced to flee both home and employment, living life on the run due to the burden of carrying Falkland's secret.

---

<sup>8</sup> Holcroft, 'Preface,' *Alwyn*, p. 44. Also quoted by Kelly, *English Jacobin Novel*, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> 'Notes on Friendship,' MS Abinger, c.36, fols. 40-4.

## Initial Impressions, Esteem, and Influence

In 1786 William Godwin met Thomas Holcroft. Although very little is recorded of their initial meeting, the influence each man had on the other and the intellectual friendship they developed is of strong significance, particularly when considering Godwin's progressing theory of sociability.<sup>10</sup> Godwin records that his and Holcroft's 'acquaintance commenced in 1786, and our intimacy in 1788.'<sup>11</sup> Beginning in 1788, Godwin's diary documents 1435 meetings with Holcroft: the first is an entry for the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1788 that simply notes 'Dine at Holcroft's,' the last entry records Holcroft's funeral on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> April 1809.<sup>12</sup> William St Clair writes that, Thomas Holcroft 'was one of the most remarkable men of his time,' and it is the attraction he and Godwin had to one another's characters that is more striking than the record of their initial meeting shows.<sup>13</sup> In a manuscript concerning his own character, Godwin acknowledges that his 'mind stands greatly in need of stimulus and excitement,' and continues, 'I am deeply indebted in this point to Holcroft.'<sup>14</sup> Godwin most obviously refers to their discussions and literary collaboration, particularly when devising principles of political justice, but he may also be seen as remarking upon their intimate friendship which was a place in which 'to seek' stimulus through 'the salutary advice of a

---

<sup>10</sup> William St Clair writes that Thomas Holcroft 'was to be, for many years, the most important influence in [Godwin's] life.' *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 38; whilst W. M. Verhoeven concedes: 'Of all of Holcroft's intellectual and political affiliations, that with William Godwin was without a doubt the most influential.' 'Politics for the People: Thomas Holcroft's Proto-Marxism,' in Wallace and Markley, *Re-viewing Thomas Holcroft*, 197-217 (p. 198).

<sup>11</sup> William Godwin, 'Godwin's Own Character,' Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger, c. 32, fols. 37-40.

<sup>12</sup> *GD*. 'Their friendship spanned a period of over twenty years, but in 1805 they quarrelled after Holcroft read in the character of Scarborough in Godwin's *Fleetwood* an unflattering description of himself. They continued to see each other in the company of others, but never regained their intimacy, until Holcroft asked for Godwin just days before his death: 'and with tears in his eyes murmured the words, "My dear, dear friend" again and again. Nothing else was ever said.' St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 305.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 38.

<sup>14</sup> 'Godwin's Own Character,' MS Abinger, c. 32, fols. 37-40.

friend'.<sup>15</sup> Whilst their intellectual compatibility is notable, so too is the understanding Holcroft's life-experience provided: 'Holcroft knew things that book-learning could never supply.'<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, Holcroft's thirst for knowledge was great and in his memoirs he describes how, from an early age, his book-learning set him apart from his peers, and he was never really satisfied until he transformed himself into a man of letters in London.<sup>17</sup> He had first arrived in 1770 with little other idea than to get himself to the metropolis, and 'In the streets of London [he was] without money, without a friend that shame or pride would suffer him to disclose his wants to, or a habitation of any kind to hide his head in.'<sup>18</sup> However, his memoirs also refer to his involvement in spouting clubs.<sup>19</sup> As Betsy Bolton notes, spouting clubs comprised the 'gatherings of tradesmen, apprentices, and women acquainted with them, meeting in public houses to act out speeches and scenes from the Georgian and later the nineteenth-century stage.'<sup>20</sup> The memoirs explain that Holcroft settled on a plan to enlist as a soldier in the East of India Company, but that on his way to enlist he had a chance encounter with an acquaintance whom he had met at a spouting club, and this 'spouting friend'

---

<sup>15</sup> 'Notes on Friendship,' MS Abinger, c. 36, fols. 40-4.

<sup>16</sup> St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 39.

<sup>17</sup> When a stable boy at Newmarket, Holcroft recalls: 'I despised my companions for the grossness of their ideas, and the total absence of every pursuit in which the mind appeared to have any share. It was even with sneers of contempt that they saw me intent on acquiring some small portion of knowledge: so that I was far from having any prompter, either as a friend or a rival.' *Memoirs*, p. 64. It is notable that Godwin had struggled with his peers at Hoxton, due to his intense questioning.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 67. Holcroft describes how when he was a young child, he and his family had occasion to sleep under damp hedges in the open country, due to his father's being a journeyman shoemaker who persistently moved his family around. Holcroft's descriptions of abject poverty are heartrending and insightful. Getting himself to London without accommodation or employ would have been less intimidating to Holcroft than most, due to his upbringing. *Ibid*, p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> Holcroft records how as a young boy he saw a performance given by a clown, 'The Merry Andrew,' at Wisbech Fair in Cambridgeshire. He was so enticed by 'Andrew's' performance that he attributes 'an ardent love of the dramatic art' as having formed that day, which helps to make sense of his initial interest in spouting. *Ibid*, p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> Betsy Bolton, 'Theorising Audience and Spectatorial Agency,' in *The Oxford Handbook of The Georgian Theatre 1737-1832*, ed. by Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 31-52 (p. 47).



encouraged Holcroft to audition for a job in a company of travelling players, rather than pursue his intended plan.<sup>21</sup> Although details are scant, they do reveal that Holcroft's time as a spouter was enough to have formed such an acquaintance, and his 'spouting friend' recognised he had talent enough to audition for theatre. Taking his friend's advice, Holcroft had a successful audition, but went on to have an unhappy experience as an actor in Ireland for Charles Macklin's company, and returned home where he worked in a number of travelling theatre companies before returning to London to concentrate more fully on his desire to write. Godwin formed a keen interest in theatre, and his introduction to Holcroft, who was both actor and playwright, would have also attracted his attention. In 1784, Holcroft had travelled to Paris to see Beaumarchais's hugely successful *Marriage of Figaro*. He failed to convince the proprietors to sell him a copy of the script, so with the help of a friend he wrote down the play from memory, and the equally successful English version opened at Covent Garden theatre with Holcroft playing Figaro on opening night.<sup>22</sup> To hear first-hand accounts of such undertakings must indeed have fulfilled Godwin's desire for mental 'stimulus and excitement.'<sup>23</sup>

When Holcroft and Godwin met they were both pursuing the same trade, but noticeably Holcroft, who now boldly claimed 'the status of an 'author' just as more middling writers did,' had forged strong and notable dissenting acquaintances.<sup>24</sup> His connections with publishers George Robinson and Joseph Johnson and other notable dissenters, as well as his close friendship with Godwin, would have granted him valuable insight into key cornerstones of dissenting tradition such as academy training. Miriam Wallace and A. A.

---

<sup>21</sup> Holcroft, *Memoirs*, p. 67.

<sup>22</sup> The play opened here as *The Follies of the Day*, Ibid, pp. 126-8.

<sup>23</sup> 'Godwin's Own Character,' MS Abinger, c. 32, fols. 37-40.

<sup>24</sup> Quoting, Miriam Wallace and A. A. Markley, 'Introduction' in, *Re-viewing Thomas Holcroft*, 1-14 (p. 5).

Markley have written that following an ‘early period of religious piety, Holcroft became a devoted rational dissenter and ultimately an atheist.’<sup>25</sup> Holcroft may not have been an academy student, but as Tessa Whitehouse notes:

In the case of dissenters, attributes of sociability and commitment to education associated with enlightenment can be found throughout the teaching and publishing activities of Watts, Jennings, Doddridge, Orton, Palmer, and Kippis [...] These dissenters’ enactments of learned friendship within and beyond their own community fed into British enlightenment-era culture both in terms of the information and ideas they shared, and the models they provided for future exchanges when their letters were printed.<sup>26</sup>

Holcroft can certainly be defined as a non-conformist who was ‘beyond their own community,’ but as Whitehouse’s findings show there was a general understanding of academy principles amongst the wider community thanks greatly in part to print. Holcroft’s place is significant, not least because we need to understand how Godwin’s friendship with him was influenced by rational dissent and its academies, but also to better determine what Holcroft’s sociable model, that of a lapsed dissenter, offered Godwin. Wallace and Markley write of how Holcroft, ‘hungered for continual self-improvement and refashioning for himself and others.’<sup>27</sup> Without institutional background, Holcroft was already an example of someone who was set on a path of self-education and betterment and

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Whitehouse, *Textual Culture*, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> Wallace and Markley, *Re-viewing Thomas Holcroft*, 1-14 (p. 1).

of publishable worth. Such evident achievement and determination was not lost on Godwin.

Copies of the works of Helvétius, Condorcet, Holbach, Voltaire and Rousseau were found in Holcroft's library, and as W. M. Verhoeven notes, '[l]ike the philosophes and other perfectibilitarians, [Holcroft] held the deep conviction that truth is the ultimate of moral virtues, secrecy is sin and silence is falsehood.'<sup>28</sup> Verhoeven also acknowledges that these were 'the same authors from whom Holcroft would derive his rabid atheism.'<sup>29</sup> As Clemit has shown, during Godwin's first unsettled appointment as minister to a congregation in Stowmarket '[h]is move towards religious heterodoxy was accelerated by his reading of the French *philosophes*' (*GL* I, xxxvii). Therefore, when Holcroft and Godwin met not only were they in pursuit of the same trade, they had shared interests in reading, and were progressing towards compatible philosophical and religious thought. It was no easy feat for Godwin to utilise free enquiry and private judgement against his own faith, but it was another vital step towards his becoming a man devoted to the rights of man and political justice.<sup>30</sup> Marshall writes that 'Holcroft's immediate impact was on Godwin's religious beliefs'; Marshall continues that, it was Holcroft who declared to a friend that the true heaven was only to be found in the 'improvement of the mind.'<sup>31</sup> For Godwin, Holcroft's words became reality as he moved away, via Holcroft, from the dissenting preoccupation with a higher power, religious rights, and the afterlife, to focus more fully on questions concerning the capabilities of mankind, political justice, and the here and now.

---

<sup>28</sup> 'General Introduction,' *Early Novels, Novels and Selected Plays*, p. xviii. A quest for truth formed an essential part of dissenting academy training.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xv.

<sup>30</sup> St Clair notes that 'it was no light step,' for Godwin, 'to abandon the faith of his ancestors and he was tortured with worries [...] He was afraid too, of what his family and friends would say if he lapsed.' *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 57.

<sup>31</sup> Marshall, *William Godwin*, p. 74, quoting Holcroft, *Memoirs*, p. 33.

In 1783 Holcroft had written that there are ‘no good governments.’<sup>32</sup> The same year that they met, Godwin had been offered, but refused, the editorship of the *Political Herald*, the opposition paper founded by Charles Fox, Edmund Burke, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan on which Godwin already worked. Godwin and Holcroft’s intimacy did not really develop for another two years, but it is striking that refusing what would otherwise seem an excellent opportunity signals the strength of Godwin’s reluctance to align fully with government of any kind. As he and Holcroft grew closer, their shared interests would become ever more apparent and consequential.

During the second year of his return to London (1778), Holcroft began to publish his serial narrative *Manthorn, the Enthusiast*.<sup>33</sup> This relatively unexamined early work gives an important sense of the man Godwin was to meet.<sup>34</sup> Holcroft uses *Manthorn* to consider acceptable and unacceptable modes of sociability and although his narrative is incomplete, he uses it to signpost the suitability of theatre. *Manthorn* also reveals how religious doubt was already prevalent in Holcroft’s progressive theory. Whilst seeking to emphasise moral and political purpose, *Manthorn* appears set on a course to promote the capabilities of the human mind, and questions religious belief and the mythology of superior invisible beings. Published at the time that Godwin was leaving Hoxton, *Manthorn* became ever more significant as Godwin’s own crisis of faith was developing.

---

<sup>32</sup> Wallace and Markley, *Re-Viewing Thomas Holcroft*, 1-14 (p. 3). Marshall suggests that Holcroft argued that governments should be superseded by a rational society of “absolute freedom” in which equals have their property “sole, and undivided, to their own use”, and are “not shackled by the degrading recollection of dependence, nor deterred by the rapacity of power.” Marshall, *William Godwin*, p. 74, quoting Thomas Holcroft, *The Family Picture; or, Domestic Dialogues on Amiable and Interesting Subjects; Illustrated by Histories, Tales, Fables, Anecdotes, &c, Intended to Strengthen and Inform the Mind*, II, 209.

<sup>33</sup> *Manthorn* was published anonymously in *Town and Country Magazine*.

<sup>34</sup> See also Incorvati, ‘Developmental Stages’ in, Wallace and Markley, *Re-Viewing Thomas Holcroft*, pp. 17-30.

### ***The History of Manthorn the Enthusiast (1778-9): Religious Doubt, Self-Learning, Social Growth and Theatre as an Acceptable Mode of Sociability***

When Holcroft and Godwin met, Holcroft had already begun to transfer ‘his energies from religious concerns to political thinking.’<sup>35</sup> However, key elements of rational dissent and the academy model, with its emphasis on free enquiry and debate, did complement Holcroft’s own beliefs. The central themes in *Manthorn* echo these fundamental principles, and are the pursuit of truth, the importance of free enquiry, and the value of reason and rational thought. Notably, however, religious principles are ultimately portrayed as dubious, as Holcroft questions how far religion is contrived by man and centred on mythology. Religious fanaticism encompasses dangerous politics and is responsible for creating social divides and stunting social growth. Although incomplete, *Manthorn*’s reflective narrative shows a mind that once freed from the shackles of religious belief, is filled, rather, with a superior sense of the capacity of mankind to progress toward a greater good. Holcroft uses the character of *Manthorn* to deliver a dry account of ‘the mysteries of Methodism,’ and to question Christianity and religious belief more widely, whilst also carefully considering the need for tolerance.<sup>36</sup>

The reader is introduced to George *Manthorn* as a schoolboy who displays a strong sense of what is morally just, but who is also characterised by a ‘daring, headlong disposition.’<sup>37</sup> His mother is dead, and his father who lives until *Manthorn* is sixteen has ‘cut off’ *Manthorn*’s elder brother ‘with a shilling, as a punishment for the excesses of his youth.’<sup>38</sup> Seemingly in response to his brother’s waywardness, their father gives *Manthorn* a copy of Richard Baxter’s

---

<sup>35</sup> Wallace and Markley, *Re-Viewing Thomas Holcroft*, 1-14 (p. 3).

<sup>36</sup> *Manthorn*, p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*.

*A Call to the Unconverted*, ‘a religious book that painted the joys of heaven, and the pains of hell in flame colours.’<sup>39</sup> Baxter writes:

If I were in your unconverted carnal state, and knew but what I know, and believed but what I now believe, methinks my life would be a foretaste of hell: How oft should I be thinking of the terrors of the Lord, and of the dismal day that is hastening on. Sure, Death and hell would be still before me. I should think of them by day, and dream of them by night, I should lie down in fear, and rise in fear, and live in fear, lest death should come before I were converted.<sup>40</sup>

‘The fears and anxieties’ Baxter’s text creates in Manthorn are never forgotten by him, when as a child, its portrait of the devil leaves him ‘fearful when alone, terrified at the approach of darkness [...] when in bed I have recollected any action of mine which I thought might be deemed a sin, lest Satan should come and carry me away through the roof of the house.’<sup>41</sup> Literary form is presented as a powerful tool that both adult and child can access. Manthorn informs the reader that due to the effects of Baxter’s text he began to favour the company of old women who, fearful of their own sins ‘or half insane and superannuated, had the most gloomy apprehensions respecting the

---

<sup>39</sup> Richard Baxter (1615-91) was a Puritan pastor, author, and man of affairs. Many were influenced by his writings including John Wesley. Richard Baxter, *A Call to the Unconverted, to Turn and Live: and Accept of Mercy, While Mercy May be Had; as Ever They Will Find Mercy in the Day of Their Extremity, From the Living God* (London: Printed by R. W. for Nevil Simmons, 1658), this work went through over thirty editions before 1800. Holcroft returns to this text in *The Adventures of Hugh Trevor* (1794-7), where he describes ‘the horrors of hell’ described in Baxter’s *A Call to the Unconverted*. Holcroft writes: ‘It is by such imagery that so many of the disciples of Methodism have become maniacs.’ p. 79. For an informative historical account of Methodist hysteria see E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1963, repr. 2013), pp. 418-20; also the same as a whole for a detailed account of eighteenth century Methodism.

<sup>40</sup> Baxter, *A Call to the Unconverted*, p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> *Manthorn*, p. 8. Baxter also writes: ‘How eager are the devils to be doing with thee that have tempted thee, and do but wait for the word from GOD, to take and use thee as their own!’ *A Call to the Unconverted*, p. 9.

tyranny of invisible beings.’<sup>42</sup> Neither this admission, nor the fact that a young life is in effect dwindling away due to ‘the tyranny of invisible beings,’ is portrayed as commendable: Manthorn’s state during this period is described as a ‘moping fit of melancholy.’<sup>43</sup> Having first portrayed the old women as being of unsound mind, Holcroft is swift to instil the sense that, likewise, Manthorn’s young, inquisitive mind is being oppressed by a faith derived from fear. Manthorn informs the reader that having sought salvation, he ‘was soon initiated in all the mysteries of Methodism.’<sup>44</sup> Although Holcroft uses Manthorn’s early experience to critique Methodism, and Methodist hysteria, such as is evident in the deranged old women of his acquaintance, his argument develops to express misgivings concerning Christianity more broadly.<sup>45</sup> Significantly, the works of Baxter were of enduring renown and appealed to any Protestant denominations: notably, *A Call to the Unconverted* is said to have inspired Philip Doddridge’s *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*.<sup>46</sup> Manthorn’s critique of so widely revered a text is a firm indication of the strength of Holcroft’s attack on dissenting religion. Holcroft uses both character and circumstance in *Manthorn* to portray man at his most exaggerated, so as to examine religious extremes: emphasising fanaticism, hypocrisies, and their effects highlights the need for rational thought and action. Holcroft signals what is to follow

---

<sup>42</sup> *Manthorn*, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> E. P. Thompson writes of Methodist hysteria: ‘The methods of the revivalist preachers were noted for their emotional violence; the tense opening, the vivid descriptions of sudden death and catastrophe, the unspecific rhetoric on the enormity of sin, the dramatic offer of redemption. And the open-air crowds and early congregations of Methodism were also noted for the violence of their enthusiasm – swooning, groaning, crying out, weeping and falling into paroxysms.’ *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 418. Holcroft further uses *Manthorn* to comment on the effects of a field preacher, who moved the old women amongst his audience to ‘utter Amen so frequently, so fervently, and with such far-fetched sighs, and hollow groanings, during a string of extempore incoherencies which, like a witch’s incantations, were to draw a spirit to his assistance, and, in which he modestly begged, among a number of other strange petitions, that he, like St. Paul, might be caught up into the seventh heaven.’ *Manthorn*, p.9.

<sup>46</sup> See Maurice Roberts, ‘Richard Baxter and His Gospel,’ *Banner of Truth Magazine*, 339 (1991), <<https://www.puritansermons.com/baxter/baxter19.htm>>.

and exerts not just the right, but necessity of free enquiry even, or particularly, when considering religious ‘truths.’

Following his father’s death, Manthorn becomes apprentice to a bookseller named Nehemiah Motto. His description of that gentleman’s house is a clear indication that Holcroft is using his narrative as a criticism of blind faith, and Christianity more broadly. Motto is described as ‘a very strenuous Churchman,’ and his wife as ‘a rigid Anabaptist, and a maiden sister who lived with them, and who had received her education in a convent in France, a bigoted Roman Catholic.’<sup>47</sup> ‘Only conceive,’ Manthorn drily reflects, ‘what a happy family this must be!’ He continues:

If all the legions of devils that ever fable furnished, had clubbed their wits together, they could not have contrived any thing more effectual to have increased the discord of this snarling society than to send me among them. Such splitting of opinions! such interpretation of texts! such questions from, and appeals to the Rev. Mr. Monday, and the divine Mr. Grundy! such turning and twisting, such canting and lying, such bitter denunciations of fire and brimstone, fiends and flames, prongs and pitch, death and damnation.’<sup>48</sup>

The passage stages religion as if a pantomime, and brings to life in comic terms the text of Baxter’s pamphlet. Now, Manthorn is able to refer lightly to ‘all the legions of devils that ever fable furnished,’ gesturing to the reader that devils no longer torment him as they once

---

<sup>47</sup> Holcroft signals his disapproval of Motto’s, and thereby wider belief, in the inferiority of women, as Manthorn writes that Motto: ‘had a vast opinion of the superiority which his *sect*, as he called it, enjoyed over the female, and roundly asserted, that no woman had either the power or the permission to judge of right or wrong; women, being according to him, of no manner of use in the world, except to breed children, and make mischief.’ *Manthorn*, p. 10.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10.



did through the imagery of Baxter.<sup>49</sup> Baxter successfully instilled ‘terror’ in his ‘religious book that painted the joys of heaven, and the pains of hell in flame colours,’ but, Motto, his wife, and sister, choose to furnish their household with the same imagery only to satisfy a thirst for theatrics and denominational triumph. ‘Fire and brimstone, fiends and flames, prongs and pitch, death and damnation’, when spoken through the ‘twisted’ characters of either Motto, his wife, or sister, become nothing more than ‘bitter denunciations’ and ‘lies.’ Further than this, ‘divines’ such as ‘Mr. Grundy’ and ‘the Rev. Mr. Monday’ are reduced to mere mortals, and any assumption of their superiority becomes questionable. By displaying intolerance amongst family members due to differences in religious opinion, *Manthorn*, however comically, draws attention to the need for greater tolerance, but also stresses the need for rational thought, which cannot help but question to what extent religion has been construed by man and is founded on ignorance.

Giving individuals status without properly questioning their beliefs, highlights inexperience. Manthorn can now understand the error in his unquestioning willingness to act on fear, and embrace zealous religion, but he can also respond by contemplating his own progression and now appreciates how experience generates reason and questions blind-faith, asserting instead ‘devotion to truth.’<sup>50</sup> Keen

---

<sup>49</sup> Although writing about Thomas Paine’s later *Age of Reason* (1794-5), Marilyn Butler notes how it: ‘struck at the properties in what to some minds seemed profounder terms, for it was a frontal attack on revealed religion in the new French mythological manner – “it is curious to observe how the theory of what is called the Christian Church sprung out of the tail of the heathen mythology ... The Christian theory is little else than the idolatry of the ancient mythologists, accommodated to the purposes of power and revenue.”’ *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 78, quoting Paine, *Age of Reason*. Incorvati notes that a story in 1778-9 that ‘records a need for religious tolerance and progressive inquiry, though not unexpected when read through the lens of [Holcroft’s] later novel, is noteworthy. While France had its share of literature advocating these progressive notions – Voltaire published *Candide* in 1759 – Rodney Baine observes that *Manthorn* probably constitutes the first English work of narrative fiction to advocate such a position.’ *Manthorn*, p. xxxviii.

<sup>50</sup> Quoting Incorvati, *Manthorn*, p. xxxviii.

always to highlight the moral purpose of his novels, Holcroft reveals that his early narrative is no exception.<sup>51</sup> Incorvati remarks '[i]n the course of his narrative, the protagonist Manthorn sheds his own evangelical leanings and observes that he becomes a thorn to zealots when his opinions make "the search for truth their principal object."<sup>52</sup> Holcroft develops, through *Manthorn*, a greater interest in the mind, which once freed from the shackles of religious belief is imbued with a superior sense of the capacity of mankind to progress toward a greater good.

Recovering from his first romantic encounter, drunkenness, a brawl, and the hysteria such evidence of his 'backsliding' causes amongst the house of Motto, Manthorn finds what he defines as a 'rational guide,' a book which 'treated religion, and particularly fanaticism, very freely.' His descriptions of the book have the effect of instilling a sense of vital calm, amongst so much hysteria, and reveal Holcroft's progressive theory:

This work informed me, that in order to judge rationally, I must resolve to think for myself, and not believe any doctrines, any opinions any books, or any man's assertions, however wise or holy such might be reputed, without first examining them, and being certain that my reason was convinced.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> In his preface to *Manthorn*, Holcroft writes: 'It is universally allowed that pictures of human life, and the accounts of the mistakes and misfortunes of others, when done with judgment and genius, are exceedingly entertaining, and when there is a strict attention paid to their moral tendency, they are even more beneficial than delightful.' p. 1. In his *Memoirs* he reflects: 'I write these memoirs with a conscious desire to say nothing but the pure truth; the chief intention of them being to excite an ardent emulation in the breasts of youthful readers, by showing them how difficulties may be endured, how they may be overcome, and how they may at last contribute, as a school of instruction, to bring forth hidden talent.' p. 26.

<sup>52</sup> *Manthorn*, p. xxxviii.

<sup>53</sup> *Manthorn*, p. 22.

Holcroft uses *Manthorn* to convey his belief in the power of the written word, and of literature as a valuable means for portraying vital truths. Having shown the reader the negative effect of Baxter's text which uses powerful language and imagery to instil fear in order to achieve its aims, Holcroft now reveals that the error also lies with a reader who does not push their mind to think beyond boundaries and take time to fully reflect on what has been read. To exercise such principles is to experience liberation. Therefore, Holcroft also uses *Manthorn* to position literature beyond institution. Considering established religion, the 'rational guide' contemplates the effects of blind faith. Profound in his observations, contemplating the 'mischief' and 'cruelty' borne and suffered in the name of 'religion,' the guide questions the division caused amongst families and nations, and queries the feasibility of scriptures that are continually undergoing translation. Notably, this 'rational guide' criticises the Muslim faith as well as Christianity, and observes ambition, and the striving for power and dominance in both religions.<sup>54</sup> Religious fanaticism is shown as encompassing dangerous politics and is responsible for causing social division and stunting social growth. As Godwin began to question the scope of rational thought and free enquiry within the boundaries of religious belief and establishment, so too, Holcroft had already posed similar questions in *Manthorn*.

The 'rational guide' in *Manthorn* goes on to describe the oppressiveness of religions that operate on faith by fear, and, significantly, *Manthorn* describes the guide as an author who 'stood in no dread of being called sophist, deceiver, liar, blasphemer, &c. by men,' who was, 'convinced it was his duty, to speak the truth.'<sup>55</sup> *Manthorn* builds on such expectation, so that Holcroft may be seen as

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

using his narrative to consider his own progression towards atheism and reputation as an atheist.

Although Holcroft's scepticism was growing, in considering the need to speak truths even when they will undoubtedly be met with hostility, *Manthorn* stresses the need for universal tolerance. Holcroft is careful to have Manthorn define his purpose in accentuating the zealotry of certain characters: '[d]o not apprehend I intend to ridicule religion [...] but if your religion tells you that all who are of a different opinion from yourself, are in a state of reprobation, that it is laudable to persecute and to eat pork, or a Papist, because he believes it right to eat fish; I then should be happy if I could either reason or laugh you out of such uncharitable opinions.'<sup>56</sup> In highlighting such a lack of tolerance, 'love and charity to all mankind, and that sort of benevolence which instructs you to assist your fellow creature,' the joke is turned on the hypocrisy of those it exposes.<sup>57</sup> In his introduction to *Romantic Atheism: Poetry and Freethought 1780-1830*, Martin Priestman writes: "'Romantic' writers use religious, 'supernatural' terminology to describe objects, experiences and ideas which they know to be purely 'natural', thus turning the language of religion against itself by directing the feelings of reverence and attachment it has traditionally demanded towards the 'world' it has traditionally downgraded.'<sup>58</sup> In *Manthorn*, Holcroft uses 'religious terminology against itself' to accentuate that the natural wellbeing of fellow mankind should be each individual's business, and succeed over bigoted interest in spiritual denomination or welfare.

Manthorn sheds his religion and discovers instead 'a passion for the stage founded in virtue,' which begins at a spouting club where he

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Martin Priestman, *Romantic Atheism: Poetry and Freethought 1780-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 3, referring to M. H. Abrams's *Natural Supernaturalism*.

realises his love of, and potential for delivering great oratory.<sup>59</sup> Manthorn compares the enthusiasm for ‘preaching’ amongst the spouters with that of religious zealots, but he is also careful to note their differences as he highlights the licentiousness of spouters and their audiences.<sup>60</sup> The influence of theatre is evident throughout *Manthorn*. Incurvati writes of how theatre audiences and readers alike had come to expect comedy that centred on Methodist hysteria. Concerning *Manthorn*, Incurvati notes ‘Holcroft in his first attempt at narrative, had some designs to take advantage of a well-established appetite in the English reading public, and readers coming to this text expecting broad comedy about Methodist irrationality, intemperate passions and divinely inspired delusions would not be disappointed.’<sup>61</sup> He further remarks: ‘Perhaps because of the Methodist disapproval of theatrical entertainment, the British stage of the 1760s and 1770s became an especially rich repository of works vilifying the purported enthusiasm of this upstart sect.’<sup>62</sup> Giving the reader, who might also be playgoer, what they have come to expect regarding the comic aspects of Methodist hysteria, Holcroft pushes the notion of Methodist theatricality back on to itself and in doing so creates rational argument. *Manthorn* uses powers of description to convey how performance can both mask and unmask important truths. Holcroft uses the same technique to illustrate the want of virtue amongst spouters and their audiences.

### **Oratory and Literary Objective, Theatre and Moral Instruction**

Having found his way to a spouting club, Manthorn quickly learns that he has been caught between two extremes. Acceptance amongst ‘saints’ has proven too narrow, but the way of uncultured spouters is

---

<sup>59</sup> *Manthorn*, p. 34.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p. 31.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p. xli.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*.

exposed as being too broad. An article concerning spouting clubs written in 1771 in the *Oxford Magazine* notes that '[t]he youths who meet at these places are, for the most part, apprentices of the lower classes, whose ignorance and want of education can only be equalled by the mad ambition they have to become actors.'<sup>63</sup> Manthorn is 'flattered' by his immediate acceptance amongst this particular 'society of preachers,' and recollects:

It was not long before I began to make myself conspicuous among the kings of emphasis and heroes of attitude. I happened to be able to read, which was far from being the case with some of them, and as my natural taste had led me to delight in oratory, I soon obtained the character of a great genius, had numerous opportunities of discovering the extent of my reading, by discoursing the thunder of Demosthenes, the power and sweetness of Tully, and the art of Quintilian. My vanity was flattered by the respect which I perceived they paid me.<sup>64</sup>

Manthorn recognises that his education sets him apart from the majority of those in attendance, but his initial delight at their reaction is soon replaced by his understanding the worthlessness of such praise. Manthorn realises that the spouter's approval is based on his powers of performance only, and not on the words he conveys. His use of classical rhetoric is significant: Victoria Myers has observed that 'classical concerns are still felt in eighteenth-century debates about rhetoric,' and notes 'a preference for evidence over artistic

---

<sup>63</sup> 'Fatal tendency of frequenting Spouting Clubs', *Oxford Magazine*, 6 (1771), 215-17 (p. 215), quoted by Russell, 'Spouters or Washerwomen', in Russell and Tuite, *Romantic Sociability*, 123-44 (p. 138).

<sup>64</sup> *Manthorn*, p. 31.

proofs and for a plain and simple style of presentation.’<sup>65</sup> Manthorn’s motive was to display his powers of knowledge in a bid to impress, rather than to execute a performance that was true to the text and an attempt to enlighten. Holcroft again employs the technique of turning the act upon the act to highlight that Manthorn regrets that the literary merit in his ‘discoursing the thunder of Demosthenes, the power and sweetness of Tully, and the art of Quintilian’ was lost, and in no way the focus of his performance. Manthorn can see that the spouters only wish to mimic well-known actors in their campaign to make it to the stage: valid performance is seen in terms of becoming ‘kings of emphasis and heroes of attitude.’ The spouter’s motives are yet more questionable; as Bolton has observed, spouters wanted ‘to have that mimicry received as original talent.’<sup>66</sup> Due to their want of knowledge, spouters neither question whether the message, its deliverance, or their own intention is moral or immoral.

Noting the consequence of uncultured and unregulated performances, Gillian Russell observes that spouting clubs ‘had been linked with debating clubs as sites of promiscuous speech that were a threat to the social order.’<sup>67</sup> Such reputation stands in contrast to, and in effect further taints Manthorn’s use of Demosthenes, Tully, and Quintilian. Incorvati writes that, Manthorn’s ‘drive to attend a spouting club supersedes his understanding that the acclaim of such audiences is ultimately a dubious form of merit, and this capacity to overrule better judgment and trigger self-compromising behaviour transforms the venue into something more troubling than an innocent, if socially unproductive, diversion.’<sup>68</sup> Spouting club audiences wished merely for bawdy entertainment and involvement, so that they were

---

<sup>65</sup> Victoria Myers, ‘William Godwin and the Ars Rhetorica,’ *Studies in Romanticism*, 41.3 (2002), 415-444 (p. 421).

<sup>66</sup> Bolton, ‘Theorising Audience’ in Swindells and Taylor, *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre*, 31-52 (p. 49), referring to Francis Stamper, *The Modern Character, introduc’d in the scenes of Vanburgh’s Æsop* (1751), p. 9.

<sup>67</sup> Russell, ‘Spouters or Washerwomen,’ *Romantic Sociability*, 123-144 (p. 138).

<sup>68</sup> Incorvati, ‘Developmental Stages,’ *Re-Viewing Thomas Holcroft*, 17-30 (p. 28).

more akin to a mob than an audience.<sup>69</sup> Holcroft reveals an early concern, and together, he and Godwin would develop a mistrust of crowds based on their capacity to become out of control, due to raised passions.

Holcroft does not turn his back on the uneducated labouring class spouters; rather, Manthorn's swift encounter with spouters and their clubs moves quickly to his coming to theatre. Holcroft's intent is to draw attention to theatre as an acceptable site of sociability, where entertainment becomes a means to educate in a manner and location that crosses social boundaries. Although Georgian theatre could be a raucous affair, it was still a more regulated environment than other social assemblies, such as spouting clubs. Holcroft believed in the cultural importance of theatre and saw it as an instrument of moral instruction.<sup>70</sup> He expected actors to convey a clear apprehension of the characters they played, and spouting clubs required neither 'consistency of conduct, nor emotional reflection, nor any careful consideration of character.'<sup>71</sup> As Incorvati acknowledges, '[u]sing a language of self-cultivation that resonates with elocutionary rhetoricians of his day, [Holcroft] elevates the playhouse as the

---

<sup>69</sup> Bolton notes the 'undistinguishing judgment' of spouting club audiences whose involvement included persistently 'shouting down' the performers. Bolton, 'Theorizing Audience,' *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre*, 31-52 (p. 51), referring to Stamper.

<sup>70</sup> O'Shaughnessy notes: 'Holcroft, who saw theatre as a tool of moral instruction, lamented the boisterous environment in an unpublished afterpiece he wrote in 1794.' *The Plays of William Godwin*, p. xv.

<sup>71</sup> Incorvati, 'Developmental Stages,' *Re-Viewing Thomas Holcroft*, 17-30 (p. 29). For a detailed examination of Holcroft's interest in how actors should demonstrate understanding of the characters they play, see David Karr, "'Thoughts that Flash like Lightning': Thomas Holcroft, Radical Theater, and the Production of Meaning," *Journal of British Studies*, 40.3 (2001), 324-56. Karr argues: 'Like their efforts to reform language, English radicals' attraction to Lavater's science illustrates a profound collective desire to develop a system of rational signification. Opposed to a regime of truth that depended on theatrical display and spectatorship, they sought to establish one of openness of plain language and legible bodies. In one of the most tightly patrolled zones for the production of cultural meaning—the royal theatre—they sought to reform signs to represent moral and political truths.' p. 343. Karr further notes: 'Holcroft's translation of Lavater's *Essay on Physiognomy* appeared in England in 1789, a decade after its publication in Europe.' Holcroft's edition was 'to become the most popular of the contemporary English translations.' p. 341.



highest of the arts, the one best suited to instruct a civic-minded audience about human nature and to encourage a desirable potential for individual and social improvement.’<sup>72</sup> Although *Manthorn* is incomplete, the first ‘principal incident recorded in the introduction’ of the final chapter reads ‘*My passion for the stage founded in virtue,*’ so that the sense of Manthorn’s arrival at a place of consequence is established from the onset.<sup>73</sup> Holcroft uses this chapter on theatre to examine players who, like the spouters, are only interested in exaggerated performance and self. Manthorn admits his initial awe of actors whom he perceives as ‘beings of a superior order, but of which mistake their own behaviour soon convinced me.’<sup>74</sup> Unlike these affected and egotistical actors, Manthorn recognises the cultural importance of theatre; and had Holcroft finished his narrative, theatre would have played its part in making a man of virtue. Certainly, Holcroft uses his second narrative work *Alwyn: or The Gentleman Comedian* (1780) to finish what *Manthorn* started. As Incorvati notes:

Manthorn professes his own convictions about the dignifying effect attendant upon his immersion in dramatic roles, and Alwyn’s performances strike a powerful chord with the benevolent George Westwood, who invests increasingly in the actor’s welfare upon learning that the virtues evident on the stage run deep in the young man’s character. The possibility that the theatre held such potential for moral development – for audiences as well as actors – apparently made it all the more imperative for Holcroft to improve the condition of this craft by pruning away its abuses.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Incorvati, ‘Developmental Stages,’ *Re-Viewing Thomas Holcroft*, 17-30 (p. 30).

<sup>73</sup> *Manthorn*, p.1 and p. 34.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p. 37.

<sup>75</sup> *Manthorn*, p. xlvi.

Theatre was a more regulated site than spouting clubs. Rehearsals could help the conscientious playwright to oversee performance. The performance of an actor who was conscious of interpretation helped the audience to realise, by way of extension, the message of a literary friend.

David Worrall gives a comprehensive account of the role of the Examiner of the Plays, whose job it was ‘to vet and censor not only the appropriateness of the texts and dramatic entertainments but who also helped, effectively, to safeguard the privileges of the patent houses.’<sup>76</sup> Such regulation sought to ensure that texts were as unprovocative as possible, which in turn was also an attempt to curb levels of audience disruption. O’Shaughnessy further notes that the office of the examiner, John Larpent, ‘inspired a more fundamental and deep-rooted censorship framework – an author function comprised of managers, playwrights and actors which monitored its own productions. Aware that certain ideas and sentiments would not be allowed on stage, these theatrical agents would not bother to submit contentious manuscripts to Larpent, regulating their own space in order not to provoke the official censor and draw attention to themselves.’<sup>77</sup> Such censorship came to form a crucial part of the literary collaboration between Holcroft and Godwin, and whilst, as John Bugg has rightly observed, certain authors of this period were compelled to deploy complex, new modes of writing due to the growth in government suppression, the regulation of theatre had already caused playwrights to structure language in such a way as to convey moral and political truths while escaping the censorship of the examiner.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> Worrall, *Theatric Revolution*, p. 33.

<sup>77</sup> O’Shaughnessy, *William Godwin and the Theatre*, pp. 22-3.

<sup>78</sup> Bugg, *Five Long Winters*, p. 2. Notably, both Holcroft and Godwin advised Elizabeth Inchbald not to submit her play *The Massacre* that alluded to post-revolutionary France. See Inchbald’s letter to Godwin, 3 November 1792. MS Abinger, c. 1, fols. 115-6. Also noted by O’Shaughnessy, *William Godwin and the Theatre*, p. 23.

In 1787 Holcroft defined the moral and political purpose of theatre, in his preface to his play *Seduction*.<sup>79</sup> He writes that although many ‘improper persons’ attend theatre, it ‘has a most powerful and good influence on morals.’ Theatre is made up of people from every tier of society, and Holcroft notes that attendance amongst the lower-classes is increasing. He is confident that theatre is the right place for the lower-classes to gather; it is where they will be able to witness and comprehend ‘heroic principles,’ that will encourage ‘actions that honour not only individuals but nations.’<sup>80</sup> As Philip Cox observes, theatre therefore has ‘an implicit political function; its aim is to “rouse” and “impel” the lower-class audience to actions that are “heroic” and the significance of which are felt at a national level.’<sup>81</sup> Holcroft’s concern for the lower classes stemmed from his own upbringing and social growth. Continuing to focus on the political function of theatre, Holcroft then challenges attitudes towards theatre that are prevalent amongst those of the ‘political world’. He continues:

Those who can doubt this are to be pitied. And it is piteous, most piteous, that, not only the learned, but, the political world should treat the stage with neglect; nay, with contempt: that they do not combine, and employ the high powers they possess to the encouragement and perfection of an art which, being, in its own nature, so delightful, so fascinating, is capable of contributing,

---

<sup>79</sup> Holcroft, *Seduction: A Comedy*, ed. by Philip Cox, *Selected Plays, Novels and Selected Plays*, vol. V.

<sup>80</sup> Holcroft, ‘Preface,’ *Seduction*, p. 69. In his *Celebrity, Performance, Reception*, Worrall notes: ‘The energetic interactivity and physical proximity of Georgian audiences can easily be seen in Thomas Rowlandson’s etchings, *The Boxes*; and *a Convent Garden contrivance coop up the gods*. Worrall further notes: ‘large collections of audiences [...] broadly in accord with their class or social segment.’ In Rowlandson’s etching *The Boxes*, ‘watchmen with clubs are dispersed into the auditorium.’ p. 17 and illustrated, p. 18.

<sup>81</sup> Cox, ‘Introduction’ in, *Selected Plays*, pp. vii and viii.

so infinitely, to the happiness, as well as to the pleasure, of mankind.<sup>82</sup>

Theatre's potential for moral and political development includes everyone involved. It is a place of cultural importance and those who assume superiority and do not attend are as in need, and more so, of encountering this purposeful site of sociability as those amongst the lower-classes. Cox has noted that Holcroft's statement is also 'a reiteration of a common lament from those involved in the theatre concerning an apparent dismissal of contemporary drama by the literary establishment.'<sup>83</sup> Given that theatre was 'largely regulated by elites' such abandonment appears contradictory. Godwin would further develop Holcroft's criticism, by raising his concern that 'persons of eminence, distinction, and importance in the country,' and 'intellectuals such as himself' should be present to assist in the regulation of such crowds (*PPW* III, 118).<sup>84</sup> As Holcroft contests, to exclude theatre is in itself an unheroic action and is to put oneself above the well-being of fellow mankind.

Holcroft's preface was written the year after his introduction to Godwin, and whilst their friendship had yet to fully develop it is notable that Holcroft marks the pursuit of happiness and pleasure as a vital component of political justice, to be found in the setting of theatre. It is also notable, as Godwin's argument would develop, that those amongst his and Godwin's smaller circles of intellect (attendant either at dinner parties, booksellers' shops, tea parties, or small societies) were viewed as having a moral and political role in forming part of a theatre audience.

---

<sup>82</sup> Holcroft, 'Preface,' *Seduction*, p. 69.

<sup>83</sup> Cox, *Selected Plays*, pp. vii and viii.

<sup>84</sup> Also see O'Shaughnessy, *William Godwin and the Theatre*, p. 23.

### **Holcroft, Circles of Intellectual Friends and *Political Justice***

When Holcroft had returned to London in 1777, he initially found that he had only a 'few friends or acquaintances,' but a chance meeting at a book-stall with his old strolling friend the composer William Shield introduced him to his first intimate circle. An elderly gentleman, referred to only as 'Cannon, the son of an Irish bishop,' Shield, Nicholson, and Holcroft, 'formed themselves into a little society' called 'the Cannonian.' Meeting in the upstairs room of a small, dingy eating house, 'Philosophy, religion, politics, poetry, and the belles-lettres' were talked of and debated.<sup>85</sup> William Nicholson Junior mentions the Cannonians in the memoirs of his father, and he paints a picture of warmth, simplicity and sincerity when describing this group. Notably, he includes Godwin when he writes:

The shop my father and his friends frequented consisted of the shop and kitchen on the ground floor. In the shop were tables and benches where casual customers might get a plate of the smoking meal exhibited in the window; but the select company went upstairs, and up those stairs walked my father, Holcroft, Godwin, Hewlett, Shield (the composer of *Love in a Village*) and other men well known to the world. The room in which they went for a ninepenny dinner ran the whole length of the house and was furnished with a long table and high-backed wooden chairs.

They had one constant chairman or president, an old Irish gentleman, who informed you the first thing that his father was a bishop and expected great deference from everyone in consequence. He was submitted partly in earnest and partly in joke. On his arrival, he first put away his umbrella, then took off his great coat and fastened it with a long pin to the back of one

---

<sup>85</sup> Holcroft, *Memoirs*, pp. 104-6.

of the high-backed chairs. He then formally paid his respects to the company and the chair in form. He was a man of letters, had travelled much and was endless in quotations, especially from Milton. His name was Cannon, and the company called themselves Cannonians in honour of the great man.<sup>86</sup>

Given Holcroft's early reference to the Cannonians in his own memoirs, it seems safe to presume that he was responsible for introducing Godwin to this group, so that again, Holcroft's own sociable model may be seen as assisting Godwin's developing theory. Nicholson Junior notes that eminent men met in this relaxed and convivial way to discuss and more formally to debate: the Cannonians fused the small and friendly societies Godwin writes of in *Political Justice* with the small and friendly gatherings of the dinner parties, to allow men of intellect time to develop vital discourse. Shield, Nicholson, and Holcroft also attended dinners at George Robinson's and enjoyed the company of academy men such as Kippis; this is particularly significant for Holcroft, who 'continually ruminated on the advantages that would have resulted from a good education; and the consciousness that he had neither received one, nor could now pay for instruction.'<sup>87</sup> Just as such sociability was a means of debating, promoting, and overseeing the future hopes for dissent, it was also a way in which to encounter academy principles and re-interpret aspects of such methodology in systems of political justice.

With Holcroft, Godwin would enjoy the intimate individual friendship of his model, and the practice of participating in small and friendly gatherings — often alongside intimate friends — would further induce Godwin to devise a theory of sociability that had politics at its core and the dissolution of government at its heart.

---

<sup>86</sup> Nicholson Jr., *The Life of William Nicholson*, pp. 42-3.

<sup>87</sup> Holcroft, *Memoirs*, p. 66.

Holcroft was a crucial link for Godwin, as Wallace and Markley note: '[t]he work of Thomas Holcroft is not merely important because he himself was such a remarkable figure, but because he was for good or ill, a bridge figure between labouring Britons and the dissenting intelligentsia.'<sup>88</sup> Holcroft's background and experience provided Godwin with vital insights; but equally, as Incorvati acknowledges, Holcroft 'was determined to be the people's philosopher, making available to the disprivileged masses some of his hard-won insights into the workings of society through any popular literary form capable of containing his message of truth and political justice.'<sup>89</sup> Although Godwin envisaged a process that began with intellectual advantage, his consideration of how such a system could and would filter out into society more broadly has been given less consideration than it should. The influence of Holcroft combined with shared circles of sociability was significant. Holcroft's background, self-learning, and thirst for the education of the lower orders was great and is evident in the gradual introduction of small gatherings into Godwin's model, as when Godwin writes:

Discussion perhaps never exists with so much vigour and utility as in the conversation of two persons. It may be carried on with advantage in small and friendly societies. Does the fewness of their numbers imply the rarity of their existence? Far otherwise: the time perhaps will come when such institutions will be universal. Shew to mankind by a few examples the advantages of political discussion and undebauched by political enmity and vehemence, and the beauty of the spectacle will soon render the

---

<sup>88</sup> Wallace and Markley, *Re-Viewing Thomas Holcroft*, p. 2. Holcroft writes regarding his self-education, that 'whenever I could procure a book, I did not fail to read it.' Further on in his memoirs it is stated that: 'gleaning knowledge with all the industry in his power. He advanced as far as fractions in arithmetic, knew something of geometry, could write a legible hand, and had made himself a complete master of vocal music.' *Memoirs*, pp. 61 and 66.

<sup>89</sup> Verhoeven, 'General Introduction' in, *Novels and Selected Plays*, p. x.

example contagious. Every man will commune with his neighbour. Every man will be eager to tell and to hear what the interest of all requires them to know. The bolts and the fortifications of the temple of truth will be removed. The craggy steep of science, which it was before difficult to ascend will be levelled with the plain. Knowledge will be accessible to all. Wisdom will be the inheritance of man, from which none will be excluded but by their own heedlessness and prodigality. If these ideas cannot be completely realised, till the inequality of conditions and the tyranny of government are rendered somewhat less oppressive, this affords no reason against the setting afloat so generous a system (*PJ*, 119).

Intimate friendship was the place in which Godwin could expose and debate his beliefs without fear of attacks on his integrity. It does not seem unreasonable to assume that Godwin had Holcroft very much in mind when he writes of the ‘vigour’ and ‘utility’ of the ‘conversation of persons;’ just as it seems reasonable to surmise that Godwin’s and Holcroft’s experience as ‘Cannonians,’ their shared experience of the ‘advantage of small and friendly societies’ (or gatherings, such as dinners at Robinson’s, and tea parties) also helped to inform this passage. Godwin and Holcroft were both sometime members of the exclusive conversational club, the ‘Philomaths,’ which was founded by Henry Grove Amory, a former Hoxton pupil. O’Shaughnessy notes how ‘Godwin’s conversable world was not entirely informal,’ and continues ‘he was a member of the Philomathian Society, a conversation club that had its origins in Dissent’s strong tradition of deliberative discussion aimed at the generation of moral truths.’<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> For an informative account of the Philomathian Society see, David O’Shaughnessy, ‘*Caleb Williams* and the Philomaths: Recalibrating *Political Justice* for the Nineteenth Century,’ *Nineteenth Century Literature*, 66.4 (2012), 423-448 (p. 430). O’Shaughnessy also notes that Amory ‘studied at Hoxton Academy under Abraham Rees—possibly at the same time as Godwin, as they were close in age—but developed doubts about his ministry, and ‘to the great regret of his venerable



Wallace and Markley record how ‘Holcroft and Godwin shared the deep conviction that a superior political system must be based upon a strong value for conversation, dialectic, absolute sincerity, and simplicity of manners as modes for self-improvement and mutual instruction. These were features of the academy model to which Holcroft held firmly throughout his life.’<sup>91</sup>

### ***Caleb Williams: Friendship as the Basis for Things As They Are***

Holcroft was instrumental in demonstrating how politics could be conveyed through fiction in the forms of drama and the political novel.<sup>92</sup> Inspired, Godwin sought to deliver a more overtly political novel form: in 1794 he published his most acclaimed novel *Things As They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*. As St Clair notes, ‘The phrase ‘Things As They Are’ firmly linked the book to the tradition of protest,’ and Godwin uses his 1794 preface to describe the motives behind this gripping tale of pursuit and flight: in doing so he captures some of the tensions of 1790s British reformist politics.<sup>93</sup> Godwin writes:

What is now presented to the public is no refined and abstract speculation; it is a study and delineation of things passing in the

---

father, he quitted the academy’ (p. 431, quoting from the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 63 (1793) 373). Godwin was a member 1793-6.

<sup>91</sup> Wallace and Markley, *Re-Viewing Thomas Holcroft*, 1-14 (p. 4).

<sup>92</sup> St Clair observes that: ‘Holcroft’s first long, novel *Anna St. Ives* was being composed at the time when Godwin was drafting *Political Justice* and the two men discussed it in draft with the same candour as they applied to all their dealings [...] Soon afterwards Holcroft embarked on a second attempt to use a fictional form to promote Godwinian ideas, and Godwin again read and criticized the manuscript [*Hugh Trevor*].’ *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 117.

<sup>93</sup> St Clair continues: ‘Richard Price, in the already famous Revolution Society sermon of 4 November 1789 had urged every man present to “think of all things as they are, and not suffer any partial affections to bind his understanding”. *Political Justice* in its turn advised that ‘the wise and virtuous man ought to see things precisely as they are, and judge of the actual constitution of his country with the same impartiality as if he had simply read of it in the remotest page of history.’ *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 119.

moral world. It is but of late that the inestimable importance of political principles has been adequately apprehended. It is now known to philosophers that the spirit and character of the government intrudes itself into every rank of society. But this is a truth highly worthy to be communicated to persons whom books of philosophy and science are never likely to reach (CW, 312).

Godwin was writing his novel at a time when government use of spies and informers to intimidate reformers was steadily increasing; and early in 1793 Godwin had written and published letters signed by 'Mucius' in the *Morning Chronicle* to protest against this use of spies.<sup>94</sup> He had also followed the Scottish sedition trials involving Scottish reformist leaders Thomas Muir and Thomas Fyshe Palmer, both of whom were found guilty and sentenced to transportation to Australia; Godwin visited Muir and Palmer as they awaited their fate in the hulks in Woolwich, and he started work on *Things As They Are* just weeks after their trial.<sup>95</sup> Muir and Palmer were amongst wider friends of reform, but Godwin also developed a close friendship with Joseph Gerrald who was a delegate at the British Convention in Edinburgh, and now also faced a charge of sedition. Godwin frequently visited Gerrald in Newgate.<sup>96</sup> As Mark Philp

---

<sup>94</sup> See 'Political Letters, 1791-4', *PPW* II, 12-27.

<sup>95</sup> See Hector MacMillan, *Handful of Rogues: Thomas Muir's Enemies of the People* (Argyll: Argyll Publishing, 2005); also, Wharam, *The Treason Trials*, for informative accounts of events leading up to and during the Scottish trials, both note the political bias of hand-selected juries.

<sup>96</sup> Gerrald was the son of a wealthy plantation owner in the West Indies and was well-known amongst reformist circles. He was sent to the convention as a London Corresponding Society delegate and was spied upon. 'Godwin discussed with Gerrald at length how he might best handle his defence. On 23 January, 1794 Godwin wrote to Gerrald pointing out the opportunity he had to defend his right to work toward non-violent change, and to alter public opinion. He praised his friend's devotion to the cause of reform. However, Gerrald's self-defence was unsuccessful, and he was also sentenced to transportation for fourteen years.' Friends rightly worried for his health and he died of 'an already present tuberculosis before he could return to England.' See Gary Handwerk and A. A. Markley, 'Introduction' in, William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn. 1831 (Ontario: Broadview, 2000), p. 17.

acknowledges, '[i]n the aftermath of the suppression of the Convention and the trial of its organisers the societies agreed to collaborate in establishing a British Convention to demand reform. In consequence the leaders of both societies were imprisoned over much of the summer of 1794 and were tried for High Treason at the end of the year.'<sup>97</sup> In a 1795 preface to *Caleb Williams*, Godwin refers to these Treason Trials. Among the twelve accused was Holcroft; several of the others were friends of Godwin's and Holcroft's. Godwin records that 'Caleb Williams made his first appearance in the world, in the same month in which the sanguinary plot broke out against the liberties of Englishmen, which was happily terminated by the acquittal of its first intended victims, in the close of that year' (CW, 312). Godwin continues that his novel was composed when 'Terror was the order of the day; and it was feared that even the humble novelist might be shown to be constructively a traitor.'<sup>98</sup> He refers to the fact that 'in compliance with the alarms of booksellers' the 1794 preface had been viewed as too radical and was therefore withdrawn from the first edition.

Friendship may be seen as the basis of Godwin's work. Intimate friends, and friends who were booksellers voiced concerns and encouraged necessary restraint. Godwin's 'old and intimate friend' from Hoxton days, James Marshall, asked if he could read the almost completed manuscript, and wrote a few days later advising Godwin to consign it to the flames. Godwin writes that this cost him 'three days of deep anxiety,' but that subsequent reflection ensured that he saw his

---

Also, 'Appendix B: Letter to Joseph Gerrald on the eve of his trial for sedition, January 23, 1794,' Ibid, pp. 505-7; also in Charles Kegan Paul, *William Godwin Friends and Contemporaries*, I, pp. 125-8.

<sup>97</sup> Philp. *Godwin's Political Justice*, p. 122. The Societies in question were the London Corresponding Society and the Society for Constitutional Information, Holcroft was a member of the latter.

<sup>98</sup> Handwerk and Markley remark: 'Indeed, the political issues that Godwin addresses in *Caleb Williams* — issues pertaining to truth, freedom, authority, and power — were quite literally matters of life and death in 1794.' *Caleb Williams*, p. 18.

novel through to completion.<sup>99</sup> Godwin also makes an entry in his diary stating ‘Day of Reckoning,’ and as O’Shaughnessy notes ‘Holcroft called round for tea and delivered a critique of the first two volumes of the novel [...] this possibly suggests Godwin’s trepidation and/or respect with regard to Holcroft’s literary opinion.’<sup>100</sup> Friends were therefore involved in the literary discussion and composition of *Caleb Williams*. However, they were also its cause and its concern. As Clemit acknowledges, ‘[d]uring the writing of *Caleb Williams*, begun ten days after the publication of *Political Justice*, [Godwin] offered friendship and support to middle-class radicals facing persecution for their opinions’ (CW, xii). The way in which to honour their cause was to share news of their plight, and to ensure the continual spread of their opinions.

As Godwin outlines in the original 1794 preface, the greater vision of *Things As They Are, or the Adventures of Caleb Williams* was to reach ‘persons whom books of philosophy and science are never likely to reach’. As St Clair notes, ‘it was Holcroft who convinced [Godwin] that the novel was the best instrument for influencing opinion.’<sup>101</sup> Godwin sought to deliver a more overtly political novel that moved away from Romance narratives which Holcroft argued served ‘no other purpose than to amuse.’ He may also have been influenced by the widespread acclaim for *Political Justice* in this attempt to move radical politics beyond the small circles of like-minded friends.<sup>102</sup> Greater numbers were needed to embrace and

---

<sup>99</sup> Godwin writes of this episode in, Charles Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, I, p. 89.

<sup>100</sup> O’Shaughnessy, ‘*Caleb Williams* and the Philomaths,’ p. 439.

<sup>101</sup> St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, pp. 116-17.

<sup>102</sup> Holcroft, ‘Preface’, *Alwyn*, p. 44. Gary Kelly refers to the preface of Holcroft’s *Alwyn* as being the English Jacobin novelists’ ‘manifesto.’ See Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805*, pp. 14-19. Godwin had every reason to believe that a novel could reach the people more widely. As Philp observes regarding *Political Justice*, ‘the two substantial quarto volumes sold for £1 16s. as against the cheap editions of *Rights of Man*, which could be had for sixpence. Nonetheless, an Irish octavo edition was quickly produced, and the work was extensively excerpted in periodicals and popular literature in ways that ensured that Godwin’s readership was not confined to the elite’ (PJ, xxiii). David McCracken observes: ‘The Prime

oversee change, and one of the most powerful ways to reason with men whom ‘philosophy and science’ were yet to reach was to highlight their current political isolation (CW, 312). *Caleb Williams* seeks to challenge conventions that prohibit mankind from being regarded in terms of moral equality. One of Godwin’s principal beliefs is that ‘man is a social animal,’ and using his fictional narrative he examines the destructiveness that results from isolation: the original epitaph contains the words, ‘Man only is the common foe of man.’<sup>103</sup> Clemit has referred to Godwin’s ‘early recognition of the value of feeling [in the published ending of *Caleb Williams*] that would not be formulated until the second edition of *Political Justice*’.<sup>104</sup> It is, however, the threat to friendship that Godwin uses in the novel to highlight friendship’s value. As radicals felt themselves increasingly open to surveillance, Godwin used *Caleb Williams* to demonstrate how his system of read, reflect, converse as set out in *Political Justice* could be effective even when circles of friendship found spies and informers in their midst, and ‘terror ha[d] become the order of the day’ (CW, 312).

Later in life, Godwin would use the preface of another of his novels, *Fleetwood, or The New Man of Feeling* (1832) to reflect upon the composition of what was now widely known as *Caleb Williams*.<sup>105</sup> Signifying the importance of friendship in life as in his work, Godwin begins by reflecting upon the composition of *Political Justice* and how

---

Minister, Pitt, is said to have withheld persecution of Godwin, despite Godwin’s belief in gradual, non-violent evolution, only because he believed the price of *Political Justice* too high to do much harm. Pitt did not anticipate, however, that clubs of working men would buy the book with collective funds and read it aloud.’ ‘Introduction’ in, William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1794 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970 [repr. 1998]), pp. xi and x.

<sup>103</sup> (PJ, 307); see the original title page in both McCracken’s and Clemit’s Oxford editions.

<sup>104</sup> Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 67.

<sup>105</sup> McCracken argues that *Caleb Williams* had, and indeed ‘has established itself as a novel of adventure, psychology, and politics which can stand the test of time. It deals imaginatively and originally with conditions and speculations of the 1790s but refuses to become dated.’ *Caleb Williams*, p. xx. *Caleb Williams* appeared in 1831 in the Bentley’s Standard Novels edition and was followed by *Fleetwood*.

the support of his friend and bookseller George Robinson enabled the successful publication of that work; he further notes the importance of friends when he writes, ‘I talked over my ideas with a few familiar friends during its progress, and they gave me very generous encouragement’ (CW, 348). Godwin’s purpose in writing *Caleb Williams* was to repeat the lessons of *Political Justice*: and just as friends had helped him to discuss and develop the principles outlined in that work, his aim was to use the more generally engaging novel form to try to inspire the discussion and implementation of principles of *Political Justice* amongst wider friends of mankind. In *Political Justice*, Godwin writes that ‘society, as it at present exists in the world, will long be divided into classes, those who have leisure for study, and those who importunate necessities perpetually urge them to temporary industry. It is no doubt to be desired, that the latter class should be made as possible to partake of the privileges of the former’ (PJ, 114). Godwin’s firm belief in moral equality includes the principle of ‘a leisure of cultivated understanding’; he uses his novel to develop and outline his ideals, and to encourage ‘leisure and study’ amongst the ‘latter class’ in the act of its reading (PJ, 434).

Godwin goes on to outline in his later preface how he developed *Caleb Williams*, in particular how it was written from the conclusion back to the beginning. Critical attention has been given to the changes Godwin makes to his novel: most notably the influence of Joseph Gerrald in the more hopeful published ending.<sup>106</sup> The pessimistic manuscript ending concludes with a state of hopelessness, as Clemit acknowledges: ‘[i]n this early version the novel’s bleak ending seems to confirm and thus acquiesce in the injustice of the existing system’

---

<sup>106</sup> Kelly writes: ‘If any one of Godwin’s friends could have forced him to raise his sight above a gloomy contemplation of “things as they are”, it would have been Joseph Gerrald. Throughout his trials he had followed the advice of “Mucius”, and comported himself with the dignity of a Caleb Williams or a Frank Henley, exposing the mean prejudice of his persecutors, while remaining unshaken in his political faith.’ *The English Jacobin Novel*, p. 197. Marshall notes: ‘the new ending enacts the triumph of justice which failed to take place at Gerrald’s trial.’ *William Godwin*, p. 152.

(*CW*, xxv). However, the impact of friends inspired Godwin to write an ending that is true to his *Political Justice*, as Clemit also acknowledges: '[w]hile the original manuscript ending lacks an affirmative resolution, the published ending, though still unresolved in conventional terms, supports his optimistic view that the evils of the present system are not irremediable, but are rooted in prejudice and error.'<sup>107</sup> Just as Godwin presents a challenging depiction of things as they are, he also delivers a compelling portrayal of things as they ought, and ought not to be.<sup>108</sup> As things stand, laws, prejudices, and the destructive forces of men overlook the value of friendship, and seek to avert sociability which is essential to an individual's and society's growth. Godwin's novel draws the conclusion that in order for things to change from what they are, it is necessary that man should be the common friend of man.

### **When Friendship Fails**

The novel adopts a first person narrative, and Caleb's opening address is made directly to the reader, beginning with the claim that his 'life has for several years been a theatre of calamity' (*CW*, 3).<sup>109</sup> Caleb's reference to theatre signals Godwin's intent, from the outset, that this is a work whose aims are to touch 'persons whom books of philosophy and science are never likely to reach' (*CW*, 312). His objective is to affect those who happily engage with theatre, a large part of whom are from the lower orders (or, that 'latter class' thus

---

<sup>107</sup> Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 64.

<sup>108</sup> Kelly writes that Godwin's 'aim was twofold: to expose the evils that made political reform a necessity, and to eradicate prejudice and thereby effect the moral reform which must accompany the political.' *The English Jacobin Novel*, p. 181

<sup>109</sup> Handwerk and Markley note that: 'the greatest formal contrast between Godwin and his fellow Jacobin writers comes from his decision to adopt a first-person, confessional mode of narration [...] The first-person form was of course not completely new; both epistolary fiction and confessional narratives of all kinds had made extensive use of it in European literature for centuries. Yet Godwin deployed it in particularly effective ways, recognizing the substantial impact it could have in creating psychological uncertainty and narrative suspense.' *Caleb Williams*, p. 36.

again promoting the ‘leisure of a cultivated understanding’) and he gives them an opening that uses a device that they will immediately recognise and understand (*PJ*, 434).<sup>110</sup> The beliefs Godwin shared with Holcroft in the capacity of theatre, and in theatre as a tool for moral instruction may be seen as being worked into his novel: Caleb’s claim that his ‘life has for several years been a theatre of calamity’ alludes to the moral purpose of his tale. It signals him to be progressively more like a man of *Political Justice*, who has gained vital experience and has come to share the wisdom of experience, who ‘Must have been an actor in the scene, have had his own passions brought into play, have known the anxiety of expectation and the transport of success’ (*PJ*, 209). However, although Caleb may now have the wisdom of experience, his tale is told in hindsight and from the perspective of one who had yet to gain understanding. Therefore, as the drama unfolds, the reader will recognise that Caleb’s positioning himself as an actor on a stage also serves to either credit or discredit certain of the claims he makes to his life’s ‘calamities.’ To see himself as an actor in a play casts doubt on how true or exaggerated is his representation of events, as it questions to what extent Caleb may be swept up in playing a part; the reader (like the audience goer) therefore has work to do: they must read and contemplate Caleb’s single account carefully. Caleb writes of being the victim of ‘tyranny’ and disrepute; he is consistently ‘persecuted’ by his ‘enemy’ who has ensured his isolation: ‘[e]very one, as far as my story has been known, has refused to assist me in my distress, and has execrated my name. I have not deserved this treatment’ (*CW*,

---

<sup>110</sup> As Handwerk and Markley observe, Godwin’s aims to reach a wider audience were also met through theatre ‘thanks to the success of a 1796 stage adaptation by George Colman the Younger, *The Iron Chest*.’ *Caleb Williams*, p. 37. For a detailed discussion of that play, its impact, and Colman’s changes, see Philip Cox, *Reading Adaptations: Novels and Verse Narratives on the Stage, 1790-1840* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000).



3).<sup>111</sup> As Clemit observes, '[u]nlike Holcroft [...] Godwin avoids creating characters who can be used as the author's mouthpiece. "You have repeated to me almost innumerable times the necessity of keeping characters in action, and never suffering them to sermonize", Holcroft reminded Godwin in 1800. Caleb's denunciations of tyranny and celebrations of independence are not set pieces of doctrine in Holcroft's manner, but words of a fallible character in an autobiographical memoir we cannot fully trust.'<sup>112</sup> Showing himself as completely friendless, Caleb makes an immediate appeal to the reader of his narrative in an attempt to win his trust: '[m]y story will at least appear to have that consistency, which is seldom attendant but upon truth' (CW, 3).<sup>113</sup> Godwin uses Caleb to indicate to the reader that just as the story that is about to unfold is a quest for truth, the reader's perusal of the novel must involve an individual search for vital truths: in this respect Godwin discloses his indebtedness to his dissenting academy training and 'the ideal of "candour", which might best be described as the disposition to form impartial judgements in all affairs.'<sup>114</sup>

Caleb begins by outlining his position at the start of his tale: the loss of his parents who lived in a cottage on the estate of Ferdinando Falkland, and the favour of Mr Collins, Falkland's steward, are instrumental in Caleb gaining his position as secretary to Falkland. Caleb writes of how having informed him that he believed him suitable for this position, Falkland stated that 'he would take me into his family' (CW, 4). There is nothing unusual in such terminology, as

---

<sup>111</sup> Godwin writes regarding the composition of *Caleb Williams*, that in striving to reach a wider audience he aimed to write 'a book of fictitious adventure, that should in some way be distinguished by a very powerful interest' (CW, 348).

<sup>112</sup> *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 46, quoting from 'Holcroft to Godwin, 9 Sept 1800' in, Charles Kegan Paul, *William Godwin Friends and Contemporaries*, II, p. 25.

<sup>113</sup> Kelly notes the influence of dissent when he writes: 'Godwin's novel was, from the evidence of the natures and names of its characters, an allegory of Protestant, not to say Dissenting history: the struggle for truth and for liberty, and the continual risk of incurring for that reason all the horrors of intolerance, persecution, and civil strife.' *The English Jacobin Novel*, p. 208.

<sup>114</sup> Clemit, 'Introduction,' CW, xv.

Naomi Tadmor has observed: '[v]ery often, when English people spoke or wrote about "families", it was not the nuclear unit that they had in mind — 'family' in their language could mean a household, including its diverse dependents, such as servants, apprentices, and co-resident relatives. Accordingly, Samuel Johnson defined 'family' as 'those who live in the same house.'<sup>115</sup> Whilst eighteenth-century readers of Godwin's novel would have identified with Falkland's use of the term, as the novel unfolds, Godwin uses Caleb's position as a social commentary on things as they are. Caleb explains that he is well-read, but early on acknowledges that his 'life-experience thus far has consisted only in what has been read in books,' rather than 'practical experience with men' (CW, 4).<sup>116</sup> Therefore, when Falkland remarks that 'he would take [Caleb] into his family,' Caleb records that 'he felt highly flattered by the proposal' (CW, 4). Caleb's naivety means that he misinterprets Falkland's offer, forming 'golden visions of the station I was about to occupy' (CW, 5). Caleb interprets the offer Falkland makes of coming into his 'family' in terms of kinship, and therefore of friendship, rather than within the boundaries of things as they are. As Tadmor notes, '[s]ingle men's "families" had two participating parties, the head of the family and the dependents [...]' The boundaries of these household-families are not those of blood and marriage, they are the boundaries of authority and of household management.'<sup>117</sup> Caleb sees Falkland's offer in more equitable terms; he also recognises that his position as secretary is more elevated than that of other members of the household: 'my station was in that part of the house which was appropriated for the reception of books, it being my duty to perform the functions of librarian as well as secretary' (CW, 5). Caleb's 'station' above stairs is closer in proximity to that of

---

<sup>115</sup> Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 19.

<sup>116</sup> Caleb writes: 'In early life my mind had been almost wholly engrossed by reading and reflexion. My intercourses with my fellow mortals were occasional and short.' p. 5.

<sup>117</sup> Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, pp. 23 and 24.

Falkland and Caleb therefore becomes fixated on studying his 'master's' character. Use of the term 'master' at this point in Caleb's reflections further implies his confusion concerning his position but also suggests that in making Falkland his case study Caleb will learn from and therefore copy the person he has chosen to see as his paternal instructor. This raises questions as to how far Caleb sees his position with Falkland as a matter of choice and of equality. Caleb notes that Falkland is 'recluse and solitary' and he also recognises how 'he avoided the busy haunts of men; nor did he seem to compensate for this privation by the confidence of friendship. He appeared a total stranger to every thing which usually bears the appellation of pleasure' (CW, 5). Caleb's observations act as a dark foreshadowing of his own situation, and although writing in reflection, Caleb can see then as now that being friendless and reclusive is not conducive to men's happiness or well-being. His confusion as to his own position feeds into his curiosity concerning Falkland, and later the secret Falkland bears. This results in Caleb muddling the motive of satisfying his curiosity with notions of acting as Falkland's friend.

Encouraging the reader to form impartial judgements in all affairs, the narrative changes to Caleb's re-telling Collins's account of Falkland's history. In Collins's account of Falkland, he consistently describes his character, and recognises Falkland's benevolent nature. However, he is also careful to illustrate that Falkland's goodness is constantly threatened by his fiery temper and fierce regard of reputation. This is first made apparent in the story of Falkland as a young man in Italy. When Falkland becomes a tutor to Lady Lucretia, Count Malvesi is overcome with jealousy and Falkland at first appears the better man. Having brought about Malvesi's and Lucretia's reconciliation, Falkland acknowledges that Malvesi was justified in his concerns, as working so closely Falkland and Lucretia have in effect been playing with fire. However, no sooner is Falkland to be commended than he declares 'the laws of honour are in the utmost

degree rigid, and there was reason to fear that, however anxious I were to be your friend, I might be obliged to be your murderer' (CW, 14).<sup>118</sup> The fine line Falkland draws between 'friend' and 'murderer' chillingly depicts how protection of status may so easily tip the scale. Collins remarks that Falkland 'continued abroad during several years, every one of which brought some fresh accession to the estimation in which he was held, as well as to his own impatience of stain or dishonour' (CW, 15). Falkland is aware of Caleb's fluctuating opinions of him, and as Caleb resumes his tale, having retold Collins's story, he recalls how 'I had already been, watchful, inquisitive, suspicious, full of a thousand conjectures as to the meaning of the most indifferent actions. Mr Falkland, who was most painfully alive to every thing that related to his honour, saw these variations' (CW, 119). As Caleb grows more relentless in his pursuit he lessens in Falkland's esteem, so that when Falkland catches him in the act of breaking open the chest, which Caleb believes holds a written confession of Tyrrel's and the Hawkinses' murders, Caleb has tipped the scale. In his defiance of status, Falkland sees Caleb's act as dishonourable, just as much as it seeks to dishonour, and Falkland has no hesitation in taking a pistol to Caleb's head. Had Caleb shown himself to be virtuous, friendship — perhaps even friendship more akin to kinship — might have developed between himself and Falkland. Instead, unhealthy curiosity has led to blatant disregard, so that Falkland states 'do you know what it is you have done? To gratify a foolishly inquisitive humour you have sold yourself. You shall continue in my service, but can never share in my affection' (CW, 133).

The tragedy in Caleb and Falkland's tale is that essential equality as found in Godwinian friendship cannot be reached. Having taken Caleb into his 'family,' Falkland had the opportunity to break

---

<sup>118</sup> Clemit notes 'Godwin's indebtedness to certain plot details in Holcroft's novel *Anna St Ives*: like Coke Clifton, Falkland has imbibed 'high but false notions of honour and revenge.' *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 46.

with conventional precedents and seek to embrace him as a friend rather than treat him as an employee. Caleb was a young man of promise; having lost both parents, he was alone and reliant upon the friendship of mankind to guide him and oversee his well-being. Caleb, in part due to his immaturity and inexperience, was too hasty in overlooking the goodness Falkland had shown him, and too eager in his quest to determine Falkland's guilt than reflect upon the true nature of his position. Rather than focusing on the virtuous qualities in Falkland's character, as presented to him in Collins's account, and in his own situation, Caleb chose rather to fixate on Falkland's darker traits. The discovery of Falkland's guilt means that neither can now esteem the other as the quest that led to exposure was dishonourable, like the act itself. Neither Falkland nor Caleb can prove himself a disinterested friend and the curse of sharing such a secret is both self-imposed and imposed solitude. Had friendship triumphed, Falkland and Caleb could have been the source of one another's redemption, but now they must suffer from a state of isolation. Neither Falkland or Caleb will benefit from Godwinian friendship. In 'Notes on Friendship' Godwin writes:

Man was not made for himself alone. Solitude deprives us, not only of the conveniences and elegancies, but likewise of many the noblest enjoyments of human life. Among the foremost of these is friendship: an acquisition, the pleasure of which is only equalled by its utility. By it our happiness is doubled, and our miseries are divided – Naturally inclined to communication, our joys in prosperity and success are increased, by sharing them with another, and the consciousness of contributing to the felicity of one whom we greatly esteem. In like manner, when our breasts heave with heart-felt sorrow, it alleviates our griefs

to fly to one whom we confide in and love, disclose our secret soul and unburden our bursting heart.<sup>119</sup>

Had Falkland and Caleb had time to focus on those traits in one another that each had initially recognised as worthy of esteem, then intimate friendship might have developed, and ‘love’ and ‘confidence’ would have been the result of their relationship. This would have enabled Falkland to share his ‘heart-felt sorrow, disclose his secret soul and unburden his bursting heart.’ Jointly, solutions and justice could have been sought and the unerring friendship of one man could have made the fieriest of all trials endurable.<sup>120</sup> In facing his own trial Falkland would no longer use the corruption of status to shield himself, but in showing himself to be a repentant character would seek a moral trial, subsequently supporting the cause for reform. Without friendship, only law remains.<sup>121</sup> Misusing the law, Falkland inflicts his own form of imprisonment on Caleb, so that as it stands, Caleb acknowledges ‘we were each of us a plague to the other’ (CW, 119).

Falkland’s tragedy is heightened by the knowledge that he has experience of true friendship but has lost the friend who could have been the means of helping him prevent the rash action that led to the murder of Tyrrel and subsequently the Hawkinses. Godwinian friendship is represented in the person of the poet Clare and in Clare’s relationship with Falkland. As Mitzi Myers has observed, ‘[t]he

---

<sup>119</sup> Godwin, ‘Notes on Friendship,’ MS Abinger, c. 36, fols. 40-4.

<sup>120</sup> Falkland faced, and would have to fight the death penalty. Godwin opposed such sentencing, see *PJ*, 393. Like Godwin, Holcroft opposed prisons and the death penalty believing mind would conquer and do good if men were shown kindness and granted the chance to redeem themselves and reform. See Holcroft, *Memoirs*, p. 29 and how witnessing a hanging as a child shaped Holcroft’s thinking.

<sup>121</sup> As McCracken acknowledges, in his introduction to *Caleb Williams*, the outlaw leader Raymond is also ‘unable to change his life because of the laws. His criticism of them is potent: ‘The institutions of countries that profess to worship...God... leave no room for amendment, and seem to have a brutal delight in confounding the demerits of offenders. It signifies not what is the character of the individual at the hour of trial. How changed, how spotless, how useful, avails him nothing.’ *Caleb Williams*, p. xiv.

retired poet Clare, virtually the only character in the novel who completely epitomizes the Godwinian ideal of rational impartiality, predicts Falkland's fate in warning him of his neighbor's and his own weaknesses.'<sup>122</sup> Godwin outlines the moral qualities of Clare and in doing so emphasises that he is a true friend of mankind: 'one of the features that most eminently distinguished him was a perpetual suavity of manners, a comprehensiveness of mind, that regarded the errors of others without a particle of resentment, and made it impossible for any one to be his enemy' (CW, 23). He also embodies Godwin's and Holcroft's unwavering belief in frank and honest discourse, as Clare 'pointed out to men their mistakes with frankness and unreserve' (CW, 23). Notably, when Clare moves back to the district, the rural '*cot rie*' that Tyrrel presides over as 'grand master' does not provide the intellectual stimulus Clare requires and Clare identifies Falkland as the person who can best take the place of a necessary friend and intellectual companion: '[i]t has not seldom been the weakness of great men to fly to solitude, and converse with woods and groves, rather than with a circle of strong comprehensive minds like their own. From the moment of Mr Falkland's arrival in the neighbourhood Mr Clare distinguished him in the most flattering manner' (CW, 23). Falkland and Clare attend the weekly assembly, where 'the rural gentry' gather to listen, discuss, and dance (CW, 16). Tyrrel has allowed his jealousy of Falkland to surpass his reason, and Tyrrel's and Falkland's status is such that the others hold them in high esteem and unquestioning awe. However, when Clare also joins the assembly he encourages an intellectual dimension to the weekly agenda. When one of the lady's present comments that she has read a poem of 'exquisite merit' written by Falkland, the circle and Clare intreat Falkland to consent to a reading. Clare borrows the lady's copy and reads the poem with notable effect: his reading 'carried home to

---

<sup>122</sup> Mitzi Myers, 'Godwin's Changing Conception of Caleb Williams,' *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 12.4 (1972), 591-628.

heart' meaning that may have been lost in an individual reading, particularly by those gathered who were 'plain, unlettered, and of little refinement' (CW, 25). Applause and discussion follow, and Clare informs Falkland that 'the muse was not given to add new refinements to idleness, but for the deliverance of the world' (CW, 25). Clare and Falkland soon remove themselves from the assembly, and Tyrrel presides once more as 'grand master' and vehemently attacks Falkland's poem, halting discussion: 'one speaker after another shrunk back into silence, too timid to oppose, or too indolent to contend with the fierceness of his passion' (CW, 26). Godwin uses the rural assembly to demonstrate the need for small intellectual gatherings at every level of society, and to highlight the principles of *Political Justice* that consider enlightening wider mankind:

Literature, and particularly that literature by which prejudice is superseded and the mind is strung to a firmer tone, exists only as the portion of a few. The multitude at least in the present state of human society, cannot partake of its illuminations. For that purpose it would be necessary that the general system of policy should become favourable. That every individual should have leisure for reasoning and reflection, and that there should be no species of public institution, which, having falsehood for its basis, should counteract their progress (PJ, 22).

Clare and Falkland enjoy intimate friendship and intellectual stimulus, but their prompt removal from the 'cot rie' means that the persons of 'eminence and distinction' that could guide discussion and encourage further 'reasoning and reflection' are no longer present.<sup>123</sup> In their place, the boorish Tyrrel at first inspires censure, but is successful in

---

<sup>123</sup> See Godwin, *Considerations PPW* II, 130.



silencing the crowd. Notably, however, Tyrrel realises that the wider implications of his actions are effectively damaging to himself: ‘he found the appearance of his old ascendancy; but he felt its deceitfulness and uncertainty, and was gloomily dissatisfied’ (*CW*, 26). Tyrrel is the embodiment of a ‘public institution with falsehood for its basis,’ and Godwin may also be seen as writing back at Burke’s *Reflections*, which Clemit notes is ‘concerned to impress the subject’s duty of submission to hierarchical society through a range of emotive techniques [and] to promote unquestioning obedience to institutions “embodied in persons.”’<sup>124</sup> Tyrrel is a friend to the repression of state and an enemy to the expansion of state and self, he denies the quest for truth, and the Godwinian ideal of striking out truth ‘by the collision of mind with mind’ (*PJ*, 21).

Although the episode involving Clare is extremely short, it is central to the novel and to Godwinian ideals of sociability more broadly.<sup>125</sup> Clare represents both the hope of friendship and the state of society without friendship; he also signifies the need for circles of intellect. Clare is the embodiment of true (Godwinian) friendship, which encompasses both intimate friendship and the broader friendship of mankind. He is more fully representative of the man of experience of *Political Justice* who

must have been an actor in the scene, have had his own passions brought into play, have known the anxiety of expectation and the transport of success, or he will feel and understand about as much of what he sees, as mankind in general would of the transactions of the vitriolised inhabitants of the planet Mercury, or the salamanders that live in the sun.— Such is the education

---

<sup>124</sup> *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 43.

<sup>125</sup> The Clare episode occurs over fifteen pages of the novel.

of the true philosopher, the genuine politician, the friend and benefactor of mankind (*PJ*, 209).<sup>126</sup>

When Clare lies dying, Falkland is aware of the magnitude of the loss that is about to occur, so that once Clare breathes his last, Falkland acknowledges that ‘his was a mind to have instructed sages, and guided the moral world’ (*CW*, 35). Falkland struggles with emotion and attendants restrain him from ‘throw[ing] himself upon the body of his friend’, so that as with his early manuscript, Godwin recognises ‘love’ felt in friendship; whilst Falkland reveals the ‘affection’ which Caleb ‘can never share in’ (*CW*, 34).<sup>127</sup> Clare’s motive in asking for Falkland was to warn him against any rash actions towards Tyrrel. He tells Falkland that he ‘has an impetuosity and an impatience of imagined dishonour, that, if once set wrong, may make you as eminently mischievous, as you will be otherwise useful’ (*CW*, 33). Their attendance at the rural ‘*cot rie*’ and his intimate friendship with Falkland have given Clare enough insight into the characters of both men and he warns his friend not to underestimate Tyrrel, or to view him as an ‘unequal opponent’ (*CW*, 33). Falkland understands the greater ramifications of Clare’s death, but he fails to fully grasp its individual effect.<sup>128</sup> Subsequently, Falkland falls foul to Clare’s warning and becomes a shadow of his former self: without friendship Falkland’s act ensnares him more deeply in the protection of status, and consequently law, which has ‘neither eyes, nor ears, nor bowels of humanity; and it turns into marble the hearts of all those that are nursed in its principles’ (*CW*, 266).

---

<sup>126</sup> Clare we are told was an adventurer returned to this rural abode (*CW*, 22).

<sup>127</sup> ‘Notes on Friendship,’ MS Abinger, c.36, fols. 40-4 (*CW*, 133).

<sup>128</sup> The novel tells us: ‘The death of Mr Clare removed the person who could most effectually have moderated the animosities of the contending parties, and took away the great operative check upon the excesses of Mr Tyrrell’ (*CW*, 35).

## **Presence of Mind and the Power of Literature**

As Clare predicts, Falkland's misplaced honour causes his own downfall and the murders of Tyrrel, and the Hawkinses. Due to the burden of guilt, and the dreadful secret he must bear, Falkland closes down to experience and enquiry, so that 'he is no longer a man; he is the ghost of a departed man' (*PJ*, 351). When his half-brother Forester comes to stay he and Falkland find it hard to find common ground and communicate, particularly now that 'Mr Falkland was devoted to contemplation and solitude' (*CW*, 137). Forester recognises his relative's unhappiness which arouses his curiosity. His attempts with Falkland fail and Forester's attention turns to Caleb, but their intercourse and friendship is short-lived as Falkland sees danger in their growing acquaintance and mutual inquisitiveness. Caleb's friendship in Forester is misplaced as Forester proves to be the embodiment of laws and institutions and oversees Caleb's trial, in which Caleb is accused of stealing valuable household objects from Falkland. Notably, Forester — against Falkland's will — sentences Caleb to imprisonment (*CW*, 169). Caleb accepts his fate, but not before making both an appeal and attack:

New to the world, I know nothing of its affairs but what has reached me by rumour, or is recorded in books. I have come into it with all the ardour and confidence inseparable from my years. In every fellow-being I expected to find a friend [...] I am from henceforth to be deprived of the benefits of integrity and honour. I am to forfeit the friendship of every one I have hitherto known, and to be precluded from the power of acquiring that of others [...] If I am to despair of the good will of other men, I will at least maintain the independence of my own mind (*CW*, 167).

Caleb remains true to his word in terms of seeking to exercise the independence of his own mind. Initially, whilst in prison, he does meet a Godwinian friend, the soldier Brightwel. Their intimacy is such that ‘the soul pours out its inmost self into the bosom of an equal and a friend’ (*PJ*, 209). Brightwel and Caleb meet each other on equal terms, intellectually, politically, and personally, so that Caleb writes ‘this man has seen through the veil of calumny that overshades me; he has understood, and has loved me’ (*CW*, 186). Brightwel has ‘an uncontending frankness in his countenance’ and he examines Caleb’s story ‘with sincere impartiality’ (*CW*, 185). Notably, however, Caleb tells his story to Brightwel ‘as far as I thought proper to disclose it,’ so that even in the most intimate friendship Caleb is prohibited from completely exposing his tale/Falkland. In *Political Justice*, Godwin writes:

No doubt man is formed for society. But there is a way in which for a man to lose his own existence in that of others, that is eminently vicious and detrimental. Every man ought to rest upon his own centre and consult his own understanding. Every man ought to feel his independence, that he can assert the principles of justice and truth, without being obliged treacherously to adapt them to the peculiarities of his situation, and the errors of others (*PJ*, 449).

While Caleb’s incarceration allows him the time to ‘rest upon his own centre and consult his own understanding,’ he is denied his independence and cannot therefore ‘assert the principles of justice and truth’ free from ‘the peculiarities of his situation, and the errors of others.’ As part of Falkland’s ‘family,’ current systems dictate that Caleb is so indebted to him and marked by his disobedience that he can never truly be free — just as being the bearer of Falkland’s secret

means that he must share in his guilt. When Brightwel dies, Caleb is once again in the friendless position he described at his trial and he resolves to exert ‘the independence’ of his own mind (CW, 180). In the solitude of his cell Caleb calls to mind the knowledge he has gained through books, and in the absence of a circle of intellectual friends he uses the powers of his mind to replicate the discourse and purpose of a circle of learned friends. Caleb begins by recollecting the history of his own life, and then moves on to imaginary adventures placing himself in as many situations as he can conjure. At times he allows himself to ‘boil with impetuous indignation’ whilst at other moments he ‘patiently collected’ the conversations of his mind (CW, 179). Finally, he moves on to the memory of his studies from ‘mathematics to poetry’ and classics to history, so that the works might talk to each other, and him (CW, 179). Intellect and reason help Caleb to triumph over his adversaries and proclaim, ‘you may cut off my existence, but you cannot disturb my serenity’ (CW, 180). In the absence of physical friends, Caleb recalls to mind friends contained within the written word and in doing so he experiences a form of liberation, and develops his reason and powers of discourse: ‘I cultivated the powers of oratory suited to these different states, and improved more in eloquence in the solitude of my dungeon, than perhaps I should have done in the busiest and most crowded scenes’ (CW, 179). Godwin uses Caleb to demonstrate how his system of read, reflect, converse as set out in *Political Justice* is effective even when current systems deny circles of friendship and intellect and ‘terror has become the order of the day.’ Nevertheless, Godwin’s message is stark: mankind must strive for political justice and fight to be freed from ‘the spirit and character of the government that intrudes itself into every rank of society’ (CW, 312). Caleb begins this process but cannot truly ‘feel his independence’: the reader, in turn, is challenged to consider how free they are from prejudice and error.

## Friendship Gained

As Clemit acknowledges, ‘Caleb offers a tale of errors which highlights his and Falkland’s mutual failure of “confidence” in each other’s rational potential.’<sup>129</sup> Caleb realises that his focus has been too much on self, whilst Falkland recognises his misplaced love of reputation: ‘I have spent a life of the basest cruelty to cover one act of momentary vice and to protect myself against the prejudice of my species’ (CW, 301). Falkland has inflicted on Caleb his own form of imprisonment. As Clemit has also noted, ‘[b]y showing the inner workings of prescription and prejudice, Godwin seeks to alert the reader to his or her own habitual observance of artificial distinctions, the false opinion which maintains society as it is.’<sup>130</sup> Whilst Caleb may never truly be free from Falkland — he confesses his guilt in being the cause of Falkland’s demise and therefore proclaims himself his murderer — the reader has the opportunity to learn from Caleb’s tale.

The published conclusion, though frank, is openly affectionate and emotional. Caleb’s ‘unadulterated tale,’ including his confession of guilt and his affirmation of Falkland’s goodness, moves the courtroom to tears, and Falkland to embrace Caleb. The qualities each had initially seen in the other as worthy of esteem finally result in their friendship. Clemit observes that ‘[i]n a deliberately melodramatic reversal, then, Godwin shows how sincerity and utterance may triumph where revolutionary intention fails, offering a notional model for social interaction based on the operation of frankness and sympathy [...] Here Godwin’s use of sentimental conventions shows his early recognition of the value of feeling that would not be formulated until the second edition of *Political Justice*.’<sup>131</sup> As this

---

<sup>129</sup> Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 66. Clemit continues: ‘While Falkland failed to trust him with his secret, Caleb also failed to appeal to the better side of Falkland through “a frank and fervent expostulation” of his grievances.’

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

reading of *Caleb Williams* has shown, Godwin openly refers to feelings of 'love,' or affection when describing friends and friendship whilst the want of friendship highlights its value, as unfeeling laws and prejudices result in a debilitating state of isolation. Had Caleb curbed his curiosity, and taken time to observe Falkland's character, he would have recognised benevolent qualities that operate beyond dictates of law and status; had Falkland given Caleb time to be nurtured and to grow then 'the value of feeling' would have developed more fully and each would have been able 'to fly to one whom we confide in and love, disclose our secret soul and unburden our bursting heart'.<sup>132</sup> As it stands, 'the value of feeling' is heightened by Godwin's depictions of laws, prejudices, and the destructive forces of men that overlook the value of friendship and seek to prevent sociability, which is essential to an individual's and society's growth.

---

<sup>132</sup> 'Notes on Friendship,' MS Abinger, c. 36, fols. 40-4.

## Chapter Four: Rectifying “Inattention to the Principle, that Feeling, not Judgement, is the Source of Human Actions”

This chapter will begin by considering the political theatre of the 1794 Treason Trials and will argue that it was a letter of Holcroft's, written moments after surrendering himself on the charge of High Treason, that motivated Godwin to write the influential political pamphlet *Cursory Strictures*. Holcroft used their friendship, and his letter, to spur Godwin to reach for that ‘nobler purpose’—namely composing a reformist work for the ‘general good’.

*Cursory Strictures* was a breakthrough for Godwin and his circle in terms of style and literary effects. For the first time it effectively transferred the language of radical friendship beyond the circle to a wider public. Written the same year as *Caleb Williams*, *Cursory Strictures* is further evidence of Godwin's ‘early recognition of the value of feeling,’ and of friendship.<sup>1</sup> John Barrell and Alan Wharam have read the pamphlet in terms of its legal significance.<sup>2</sup> However, I shall argue that the role of friendship within it is equally important. Godwin models his political readership on the basis of friendship; he seeks to make the relationship of writer and reader not just sociable, but generative of political solidarity. He uses emotive rhetoric to present his current concern for the plight of his friends as being the same as those of the wider public (friends of mankind), thereby signalling political alignment with the people more broadly.

Having discussed *Cursory Strictures*, I will turn my attention, in a second section of the chapter, to vital changes Godwin makes to *Political Justice* in order to incorporate the value of feeling. In 1795, Holcroft wrote a letter to Godwin in which he considers whether it is wrong to record the affection he feels for his friend. In the same letter he urges Godwin to push on with his second edition of *Political*

---

<sup>1</sup> Quoting Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 67, see Chapter Two.

<sup>2</sup> See Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death*; Wharam, *The Treason Trials*.



*Justice*. Reading Holcroft's letter alongside a review he published of the first edition of *Political Justice* effectively signals an error in Godwin's original work and its failure to acknowledge the value of feeling. I will use Holcroft's letter, and correspondence sent between Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft (during their developing relationship, 1796-7), alongside Godwin's *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1797) (published following Wollstonecraft's death) to examine changes Godwin makes to *Political Justice* (1796, 1798). Godwin would later record that his original *Political Justice* had been blemished by his 'inattention to the principle, that feeling, not judgment, is the source of human actions.' He would also acknowledge that the first edition of *Political Justice* had been flawed because of 'the unqualified condemnation of the private affections.'<sup>3</sup> The first edition more starkly and more emphatically argues that only the perception of truth is needed to motivate our adherence to moral principles. However, I will examine how each edition of *Political Justice* holds to the principle that intellectual friendship, and the affection felt in such friendship, is the basis of any worthy relationship, and this is a tenet that remains unchanged throughout. Feeling, particularly the kind of feeling that forms an essential part of intimate friendship, it is apparent, is necessary to develop moral reasoning. Mark Philp has successfully argued that new acquaintances 'did not challenge [Godwin's] central belief that it is through the practice of private judgment and public discussion that we come to recognise and act upon moral truths.'<sup>4</sup> I will argue that new acquaintances also did not change Godwin's central belief in the importance of affection in friendship; significantly, new acquaintances brought vital practice to theory, so that Godwin could more fully realise his own beliefs.

---

<sup>3</sup> William Godwin, 'The Principal Revolutions of Opinion,' (1800) quoted by Philp in, *PJ*, xxvi.

<sup>4</sup> Philp. *Godwin's Political Justice*, p. 169.

In a third section I will continue to analyse how Godwin felt strongly that friendship should be the basis on which any intimate relationship should develop. An examination of his novel *Fleetwood: Or, The New Man of Feeling* (1805) and the complexities of affection as felt in friendship and marriage as depicted in that text further emphasises the important place of friendship.

### **Terror, Trial, and Treason, the Pathway to *Cursory Strictures***

Government unease had grown steadily following assertions of conspiracy and on 21 May 1792 the proclamation against seditious meetings had been delivered. Holcroft recorded the proclamation's immediate effect; noting the instantaneous commencement of prosecutions he wrote, 'every county assize and quarter sessions condemned some poor ignorant enthusiast to imprisonment.' He also remarked how 'men of respectable characters and honest intentions, in the fury of their new-born zeal thought it a heroical act of duty to watch the conduct of their very intimates.'<sup>5</sup> Holcroft notes how friendship was being distorted: the art of spying was wrongly promoted as an act of heroism and duty, and 'intimates' were watched intently.<sup>6</sup>

By 1794, the full impact of government spying had been felt. On 12 May the arrest of Thomas Hardy, a shoemaker, and treasurer and secretary of the London Corresponding Society, was swiftly followed

---

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Holcroft, *A Narrative of Facts, relating to a Prosecution for High Treason* (London: 1795), p. 9. Quoted in *Horne Tooke's Prison Diary*, ed. by A. V. Beedell and A. D. Harvey (Leeds: Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, 1995), p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Carl B. Cone writes that the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property 'was the most notorious manifestation of Anti-Jacobinism.' Like Holcroft, Cone notes: 'As in Surrey and Minehead, so in Leicester, Derby, in many London parishes, and in countless other places throughout the kingdom, self-appointed trustees for social order encouraged neighbours to suspect one another and regard strangers with suspicion, conjured up republicans from under every bed, and imagined they saw a tree of liberty on every village green.' Carl B. Cone, *The English Jacobins: Reformers in Late 18<sup>th</sup>-Century England* (New York: Scribners, 1968, [repr. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2010]), pp. 148 and 151.

by the arrests of nine other leaders of the London reform societies. They included John Horne Tooke and John Thelwall, friends of Godwin, and Holcroft: the charge was high treason.<sup>7</sup> At the beginning of October of the same year, events were to become more startling for Godwin. He received a letter from Holcroft on the 8<sup>th</sup> October, the same day in which the news of his closest friend's voluntary surrender to imprisonment in Newgate (on the same charge) was issued in a report by the *Morning Chronicle*.<sup>8</sup> Godwin, who was away from London, hastily wrote (on 9 October) to Holcroft's eldest daughter Ann. The tone of his letter was one of alarm: 'I see by the Chronicle just received that Mr Holcroft is in custody.' Changing from cool reasoning to reckoning and urgency he writes, 'For God's sake inform me whether I can have admission to him, or be of consolation to his family. I will set off at an hour's notice.' He instructs Ann to deliver in person a letter he has enclosed to Thomas Erskine, and he writes 'at all events state to Mr Erskine that I am Mr Holcroft's principal friend, upon whom he chiefly depends, and that I prefer his happiness to every earthly consideration' (*GL* I, 106). As shown in his early manuscript and *Political Justice* and further developed in his model of friendship, Godwin identifies that Holcroft is a 'true' friend — he is his 'principal' friend — and he recognises that, as such, it will be he whom his closest friend requires in his hour of need. However,

---

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed account of the arrests see Wharam, *Treason Trials*, pp. 91–101. Regarding Horne Tooke, Wharam notes: 'For a year or two now, one of the government spies had attached himself to Horne Tooke and become a frequent visitor at Wimbledon. His host soon realised his intentions, but instead of dismissing him, he decided to hoist his enemies with their own petard. So he pretended to admit the spy into his complete confidence; he began to drop hints about the strength and enthusiasm of the popular party, magnifying their numbers, praising their unanimity, and commending their determination.' p. 92. In addition: the day before Hardy was arrested, Godwin and Thelwall had dined at Tooke's. See Christina and David Bewley, *Gentleman Radical: A Life of John Horne Tooke 1736-1812* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), pp. 151-2.

<sup>8</sup> As Clemit records: 'A report of Holcroft's voluntary surrender to imprisonment in Newgate on a charge of high treason (7 Oct.) appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*, 8 Oct. 1794, 3, and a letter from Holcroft correcting the statement in the report that he had 'admitted [himself] to be, the person indicted by the name Thomas Holcroft' appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*, 9 Oct. 1794, 3' (*GL* I, 106, fn.2). Godwin records receiving a letter from Holcroft on 8<sup>th</sup> October in his diary.

although confident that it is he whom Holcroft will want, it appears that due to the extremity of the charge Godwin is unsure whether he will be granted admittance to see him. He concludes ‘let me hear satisfactorily or unsatisfactorily by return of post.’ His message must have been carried to Holcroft via Erskine, as on 10<sup>th</sup> October Holcroft responds ‘instead of your receiving an answer by Saturday’s post, it is now Saturday one o’clock that I receive yours.’<sup>9</sup> Holcroft’s reply is motivating and is directly related to the composition of *Cursory Strictures*. He chastises his friend’s inability to reason, and his emotion as he writes:

Whether you will conclude that you can do me no service, because you cannot be admitted to me, is more than (from the reasoning that has determined you) I can foretell; but I must honestly own that this reasoning surprizes me.<sup>10</sup> Were you admitted to me, by what means could you give me aid? By consoling me? I have no need of consolation [John Gill is just admitted to me and I now dictate] By exercising your understanding, weighing the circumstances, which may be communicated to you as they occur, helping me to search for that mass of facts which have motivated my conduct, aiding me in arrangement and in deeply considering a case that may be productive of so much general good; are not these sufficient to incite you? [...] I do not wish to stimulate you to think of me, my consolation, or my advantage, not because I would not accept most willingly, any good great or small that you could do me; but because there is a nobler purpose, at which we both should aim.

---

<sup>9</sup> *GL* I, 106, fn. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Godwin had initially written: ‘I am of course unwilling to quit Hatton without some prospect of usefulness, and there seems to be an uncertainty as to the admission of friends to visit him’ *GL* I, 105.

Nothing but your letter could have induced me to write thus to you (*GL* I, 107).

Holcroft's response is loaded. In effect, he starts by telling Godwin to pull himself together, thereby speaking to him as only the truest and most trusted friend could. He spells out for Godwin that he has 'no need of consolation,' just as neither of them should desire a time to be maudlin. Rather, if his 'principal friend' were reasoning as he normally would, he would know to come as there is work to be done for the greater good. Holcroft's message may be slightly obscured, but he is summoning Godwin to his senses. Importantly, he indicates the pressing need to establish, compose, and present a written case. He has informed Godwin that he is having to rely on his servant, John Gill, to write for him (paper, pen and ink probably being denied him), and therefore Godwin's very practical services are required.<sup>11</sup> Once his, and Godwin's shared 'understanding' has been 'exercised', 'the circumstances have been weighed' and 'communicated [to one another] as they occur', and all of the 'facts' have been jointly sought, then the 'arrangement' or setting down a written case proves a necessity for the general good. Holcroft signals the literary workings of their friendship; the system laid out above, it is implied, is well-known to Godwin: once relevant 'circumstances', 'facts', and principles have been jointly considered, thrashed out, and determined, then his friend must help him with the writing of his manuscript. That Godwin has had to be prompted 'surprizes' his principal friend.

---

<sup>11</sup> Holcroft, having surrendered himself, in his initial meeting with Lord Chief Justice Eyre asked firstly if he was allowed to assign his own counsel, and 'whether free egress and regress be not allowed to such persons, books, and papers, as the accused or his counsel shall deem necessary for justification?'; so pressing was this issue on his mind. The Chief Justice replied: 'It will be the duty of the court to assign you counsel [...] With respect, sir, to the liberty of speaking for yourself, the accused will be fully heard by himself, as well as by his counsel; but with regard to papers, books, and other things of that kind, it is impossible for me to say anything precisely, until the thing required be asked.' *Memoirs*, pp. 164-5.

Thinking rationally, Holcroft knows that he must utilise the literary and discursive merits of his and Godwin's close friendship, so that a vital message may be delivered to the wider public. Thinking ahead, Holcroft recognises the necessity of recording his case in print, as it is in this way he will carry his argument to those present at court. Whatever the outcome of his trial, it was usual to publish statements, in order that what was said in court might be correctly carried out in society.<sup>12</sup> Holcroft understands that it is this communication through print that will prove 'productive of so much general good.' Should the worst happen, what is documented of his conduct and reasoning will forever remain and speak for him. Holcroft may, perhaps, have only been considering the composition of his written statement. However, as with the composition of *Political Justice*, the shared discourse, knowledge, and belief of both men inspired the writing of *Cursory Strictures*, as did Holcroft's call for his friend to aim for that 'nobler purpose.' Seen in this light, its message included one of friendship; and demonstrated that when society was threatened the principles of friendship were threatened also, but that written form would prevail and carry vital messages of truth — thus extending the voice of friendship.

### **Exercising Sociable Liberty and Debate through Form**

Motivated by Holcroft, and the need of friends, Godwin carefully considered literary style and effects in the composition of *Cursory Strictures*. In a time of need Godwin produced a work of rhetorical innovation and achievement, such as few writers have managed to

---

<sup>12</sup> Wharam notes that once the verdict of Not Guilty had been delivered, Holcroft still 'endeavoured to address the court, and an argument ensued between him and the judge until the latter warned him: "You had better take care of that, or you may get into another scrape as soon as you are relieved from this." So he went to sit by William Godwin.' Wharam, *Treason Trials*, p. 227. In 1795 Holcroft published *A Narrative of Facts Relating to a Prosecution for High Treason; Including the Address to the Jury, Which the Court Refused to Hear*.

create, demonstrably influencing public opinion and helping to defeat a prosecution for treason.<sup>13</sup> As John Bugg has noted, and as the loaded and somewhat obscure letter of Holcroft written to Godwin from Newgate demonstrates, the 1790s were crucial to the development of new written forms; *Cursory Strictures* is a key component of that process.<sup>14</sup> Anticipating that *Cursory Strictures* may be read out to those who struggled, or were unable, to read, Godwin further identified that the rhetoric of his pamphlet had the capacity to produce impressive oratory. Mary Thale records that at London Corresponding Society meetings ‘the division members often listened to the reading of a reform pamphlet or a newspaper account.’<sup>15</sup> Godwin, aware that this was a popular form of sociability, strove to produce a pamphlet of great written and/or oratorical effect. Recognising the political intensity of his own time, Godwin realised that for the purpose of the forthcoming trials a political pamphlet, published initially in one of the most popular newspapers of the day, was the best means of conveying the intended message to the greatest number. Inspired by the need of friends, and spurred by a cause which sought justice, Godwin brought together past and present to influence future.

---

<sup>13</sup> Most critical works are happy to acknowledge *Cursory Strictures*’ importance and the part it played in the accused’s acquittal. Beedell and Harvey call it ‘an important tactical victory for the defence.’ *Horne Tooke’s Prison Diary*, p. 16. Wharam is less complimentary or convinced. He claims that *Cursory Strictures* ‘was a travesty of what the Lord Chief Justice had said and does not, in [his] opinion, merit any of the esteem which it has received over the years.’ Referring to William Hazlitt’s *Spirit of the Age*, ‘Essay on Godwin’, where Hazlitt claimed that *Cursory Strictures* ‘gave a turn to the trials for high treason in the year 1794, and possibly saved the lives of twelve innocent individuals’; Wharam writes: ‘Hazlitt, it seems to me, was more concerned with fine phrases than with logic or law; I find it hard to believe that these *Cursory Strictures* could have had much impact on the minds of the juries.’ Wharam, *Treason Trials*, pp. 133 and 274. Similarly, in an ‘Answer to *Cursory Strictures*’ supposed to be written by Judge Buller, the author writes that *Cursory Strictures* is ‘false, because it proceeds on a misstatement of the learned Chief Justice’s positions.’ *Answer to Cursory Strictures On a Charge Delivered to the Grand Jury, October 2, 1794. By Lord Chief Justice Eyre, Said to be written by Judge Thumb. In the Ministerial Paper called the TIMES, October 25, 1794.* (London: D. I. Eaton, 1794) in, *PPW* II, 109.

<sup>14</sup> Bugg, *Five Long Winters*, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Thale, ed. *Selections From the Papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792-99* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. xxv.

At the start of his pamphlet Godwin refers to the ethos of sociable liberty and debate that had been seen as an ‘Englishman’s’ birth right since the Glorious Revolution of 1688. He notes that ‘the Chief Justice, in his charge to the Jury, has delivered many new and extraordinary doctrines upon the subject of treason.’ Then, claiming the right referred to, he determines that ‘these doctrines, now when they have been for the first time stated, it is fit we should examine. In that examination, I shall deliver my opinions in a manner perfectly frank and explicit.’<sup>16</sup> In defiance of current repression, he addresses his readership directly, just as though they were familiar friends who were debating the issue in person. Godwin’s circles of sociability may currently be prohibited from partaking in such discourse, but he rhetorically enlarges his circle by putting readers in the place of his radical friends, consequently opening up the debate more widely. Addressing reason and law he again straightforwardly appeals to those textual friends:

It is with some pleasure that I shall reflect upon the possibility of the enormities being aggravated or created by the imperfect and irregular form of the publication before me. Every friend of his country will participate the highest satisfaction, at finding them answered by a regular publication of the charge to the Grand Jury, stripped of the illegal and destructive doctrines that now appear to pollute it (*PPW* II, 79).

From the outset, Godwin instils the idea that this case is brought by the Government (vs. the People: ‘every friend of his country’). Together, he and his friends will strip away deceptions of law to reveal truth. Godwin is following the foundation of classical rhetoric, and the canon

---

<sup>16</sup> William Godwin, *Cursory Strictures on the charge delivered by Lord Chief Justice Eyre to the grand jury, October 2, 1794. First published in the Morning Chronicle October 21 in PPW* II, 79.



of *disposition* (arrangement) as set out by Cicero and developed by Quintilian. He ensures that his introduction is used to grab the attention of his readers and to establish trust — his own credibility. Godwin will act as his readers' (those textual friends) principal guide and 'deliver [his] opinions in a manner perfectly frank and direct.' Godwin replicates plain style as identified by Quintilian of instructing his audience and successfully creates a sense of openness, honesty, and a quest for truth. The language he has chosen is deliberately provocative: 'stripped,' 'illegal,' 'destructive doctrines,' and 'pollute' follow, and to a degree oppose, 'privileges,' 'rational being,' and 'perfect freedom'.<sup>17</sup> He trusts his readership to recognise the fragility of the case, alongside what will become apparent as the ambiguity of such 'destructive' terminology as 'constructive treason'.<sup>18</sup> He is confident that readers will fully comprehend the implications of such a charge, and realise that they may just as easily find themselves victims of the treason of imagination.<sup>19</sup> In effect, Godwin reveals his understanding of the art of rhetoric. As with Aristotle, who was frequently referred to by Cicero, Godwin recognises that persuasive language and techniques are necessary for truth to be taught to men and women at every level.<sup>20</sup> Aware of a wide audience, *Cursory*

---

<sup>17</sup> For the Five Canons introduced by Cicero: *inventio* (invention), *dispositio* (arrangement), *elocutio* (style), *memoria* (memory), and *actio* (delivery), see Cicero, *De Inventione*, transl. by H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library: Harvard University Press, 1949).

<sup>18</sup> John Barrell, in his comprehensive examination *Imagining the King's Death* records that seven different offences amount to high treason, but 'the one invoked in all the English and Scottish treason trials of 1794 is the first. It is treason, says the statute, "When a man doth compass or imagine the death of our lord the king"'. Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death*, p. 30.

<sup>19</sup> Barrell poses the question 'so where did the imagining come from?' He notes: 'The leaders of the radical societies, argued the Crown lawyers, were out-and-out republicans who had embarked on a course which might, or may, or must have terminated in the King's death. The Crown lawyers, argued Erskine for the defence, had fathered these vapours on the leaders of radical societies because they could or would not recognize them as the children of their own deluded or delusive alarmism.' Ibid, p. 140.

<sup>20</sup> Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, transl. by Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin, 1991). Godwin reveals his knowledge of, and debt to 'rhetorical wisdom' in a note dedicated to Aristotle, Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, and Thomas Farnaby (1575?-1647) 'the chief English classical scholar and teacher of his time.' *PPW* II, 92.

*Strictures* delivers a warning to this larger circle of friends that all must be on their guard against repressive forces: ‘whoever be the unprincipled impostor, that thus audaciously saps the vitals of human liberty and human happiness, be he printer, or be he judge, it is the duty of every friend to mankind to detect and expose his sophistries’ (PPW II, 11). Swiftly, Godwin has created an ‘us and them’, ‘friend and foe’ scenario.

Godwin did not need to look far for rhetorical inspiration. In February and March of the previous year he had read key political works by Cicero: *In Catilinam* (Speech against Lucius Catilina); *Pro C Rabirio Postumo Oratio* (On Behalf of Gaius Rabirius Postumus); and, *Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino* (In Defence of Sextus Roscius of Ameria).<sup>21</sup> Notably, Cicero’s early defense of Roscius against a fabricated charge of parricide established his career and brilliance.

Given the political uncertainty of Cicero’s times, and his exceptional ability, he was a fitting role model for Godwin and the other reformists of the turbulent 1790s. In recalling rhetoricians like Cicero, Godwin is also instilling the canon of *memoria* (memory), which involves storing up famous quotes, literary references, and other facts that could be used in his own composition. In both the Catilinarian conspiracies and *Roscio Amerino*, Cicero aligns himself with the people, and in the case of Roscius with the people and the accused. Cicero states that one of the reasons that drove him to undertake the defence of Roscius was that he ‘was applied to by men who by their friendship, acts of kindness, and position carried the greatest weight with me, and I considered that I could never ignore their kindness to me, nor disregard their rank, nor neglect their wishes.’<sup>22</sup> He also goes on to note that as a young unknown he has less

---

<sup>21</sup> See ‘Texts Read: Cicero’, *GD*. D. H. Berry notes: ‘The *Catilinarians* are the most famous, most exciting, and most read of Cicero’s speeches — thrilling from beginning to end, and compelling examples of the use of oratory in a fast-developing political crisis.’ Berry, *Political Speeches*, p. 134.

<sup>22</sup> Cicero, *Pro Roscio Amerino*, p. 10.

to lose than established orators, but cleverly uses this as a means of exposing political corruption whilst seeming to clear the name of Lucius Sulla, who was known to be involved.<sup>23</sup> Godwin uses the same device of aligning himself with the people and with the accused, and appeals to friendship, but given that the principal method of delivery has changed from the direct oratorical address of Cicero's time to that of written form, Godwin uses imagination constructively, and language and arrangement assertively, to position his readership in the format of a senate of known friends, and simultaneously more widely as friends accessed through print. Although Godwin's discourse is not delivered — in a sense — within the immediate moment, the language he chooses ensures that the urgency is not lost: 'he who thinks as I think, that the best principles of civil government, and all that our ancestors most affectionately loved, are struck at in the most flagrant manner in this Charge, will feel that there is not an hour to be lost' (*PPW* II, 79). Godwin understands that the words of his pamphlet/speech must do the persuading. He uses his readership as a substitute for the radical friends who have been separated from him because of their arrests. In this sense, Godwin's *Cursory Strictures* is courageous as he aligns himself with those arrested and, appeals to his readers as reasonable men and women who he hopes to align with the accused, not government. Godwin is confident that the unseen upshot of the charge, of 'compassing and imagining the death of the king', lies in the error of bringing a case that essentially involves the Government vs. the People.

### **Further Assistance in Canons of Rhetoric**

---

<sup>23</sup> Sulla was arguably the most powerful man in Rome at this time, and Berry records that most 'did not wish to be associated with a case which could be seen as hostile to Sulla [...] the trial also had a political dimension—Cicero would need to comment on injustices made in Sulla's name—and this too would bring him public attention.' *Ibid*, pp. 4-5.

After his introduction Godwin embarks upon *narratio*, the statement of facts. Ben Witherington writes that ‘Aristotle reminds us that if there is a *narratio* in a deliberative speech that it will speak of things past in order that being reminded of them, the hearers may take better counsel about the future.’<sup>24</sup> Godwin has already spoken about the ethos of sociable liberty and debate that has been seen as an ‘Englishman’s’ birth right since the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and he has instilled the sense that it is essential to continue to exercise such rights, particularly when threatened by suppression. Godwin now states that ‘Treason,’ as laid out by, ‘the act 25 Edward III. [is] one of the great palladiums of the English constitution.’ Observing that ‘this law has been sanctioned by the experience of more than four centuries,’ Godwin ‘speaks of things past’ and notes the plainness of this law in which ‘all treason, exclusively of a few articles of little general concern, is confined to the “levying war against the King within the realm, and the compassing or imagining the death of the King”’ (PPW II, 80). Godwin acknowledges that for centuries, this law has proved sufficient, before swiftly moving to consider that Chief Justice Eyre has ‘thought it proper to confine himself to that article of the statute of King Edward III which treats of “compassing and imagining the death of the King”’ (PPW II, 81). Godwin is leading his readers, first by referencing a law that has amply served their ‘ancestors,’ then by guiding them to a judge who is currently tampering with such law. He emphasises his point that Judge Eyre is using the statue of King Edward III to devise a new and dangerous ‘constructive treason’: Godwin writes that the ‘plain’ statute 25 Edward III was made as ‘a great security to the public, and leaves a weighty *memento* to judges to be careful, and not overhasty in letting in treasons by construction or interpretation’ (PPW II, 87). Godwin speaks of things past to alert his

---

<sup>24</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), p. 29, referring to Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 3.16.11.

readers to real and present dangers — that if left unattended will have a detrimental effect on ‘the future’.

Quintilian argues that *narratio* is only supposed to include the facts that are relevant to the presentation the speaker wants to make.<sup>25</sup> Having stated those facts, Godwin’s pamphlet is worked into *partitio* and *confirmatio* which are used to validate the material used in *narratio*, but also consist of the main part of the speech in which logical arguments in support of the claim are elaborated. Considering his rhetorical style, Godwin is careful to move and instruct his readers.<sup>26</sup> He contemplates the ‘conjectures’ of Judge Eyre concerning the forming of associations and conventions and guides his readers to see the imaginings of treason as occurring within the judge, rather than those accused. In his *Charge* Lord Chief Justice Eyre writes:

I presume that I have sufficiently explained to you that a PROJECT TO BRING THE PEOPLE TOGETHER IN CONVENTION IN IMITATION OF THOSE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS WHICH WE HAVE HEARD OF IN FRANCE IN ORDER TO USURP THE GOVERNMENT OF THE COUNTRY, AND ANY ONE STEP TAKEN TOWARDS BRINGING ABOUT, *such as for Instance, Consultations, forming of Committees to consider of the Means, acting in those Committees*, would be a Case of No Difficulty that it would be the **CLEAREST HIGH TREASON**; it would be compassing and imagining the King’s Death, and not only His Death, but the

---

<sup>25</sup> See Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia*, referring to Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 4.2.43.

<sup>26</sup> ‘The concept of “levels of style” comes essentially from the Roman rhetorical tradition, in which style was typically divided into three broad categories: high or grand, middle, and low. Cicero developed a partition of styles according to rhetorical purposes: High Style or Grand Style, to move; Middle Style, to please; Low or Plain Style, to teach.’ See <<http://rhetoric.byu.edu/Canons/Style/Style-Levels.htm>>.

Death and Destruction of all Order, Religion, Laws, all Property,  
all Security in the Lives and Liberties of the King's Subjects.<sup>27</sup>

Arguing that the King is an integral part of parliament, Eyre continues: '*a Project of a Convention, which should have for its Object the obtaining a Parliamentary Reform without the Authority of Parliament, and Steps taken upon it, would be HIGH TREASON in all the Actors in it; for this is a Conspiracy to overturn the Government*' (PPW II, 74). Central to Godwin's argument is this attack on sociable liberty and debate. Godwin writes of the 'Treasons which the Chief Justice imagines himself capable of fixing upon some of these associations for a Parliamentary Reform' (PPW II, 86). He focuses on the way in which parliamentary reform, and an association for parliamentary reform, has been singled out as carrying treasonable intent: '[w]hat can be more wanton, cruel, and inhuman, than this gratuitously to single out the purpose of Parliamentary Reform, as if it were of all others, most especially connected with degeneracy and treason?' (PPW II, 88). Further, he highlights the assumptions by which Lord Chief Justice Eyre claims grounds for treason. Firstly, that there was a 'concealed purpose' or, 'insensible degeneracy' in these associations; secondly, that there is a desire to subvert monarchy; thirdly, Godwin argues, that the conspiracy to subvert monarchy is a treason 'first discovered by Chief Justice Eyre in 1794, never contemplated by any lawgiver, or included in any statute' (PPW II, 88). His interpretation prevailed, as Wharam writes:

---

<sup>27</sup> Sir James Eyre, *The Charge Delivered by The Right Honourable Sir James Eyre, Lord Chief Justice of His Majesty's Common Plea And One of the Commissioners Named in a Special Commission of Oyer and Terminer, issued under the Great Seal of Great Britain, To Enquire of Certain High Treasons, and Misprisions of Treason, Within the County of Middlesex, To the Grand Jury, At the Session House on Clerkenwell Green, on Thursday the 2d Day of October, 1794* (London: Daniel Isaac Eaton, 1794), PPW II, 74.

There was [...] the persistent belief that the Crown's case was based upon the doctrine of 'Constructive Treason', a belief which probably originated in the *Cursory Strictures* of Eyre CJ's charge to the grand jury. Sir John Scott repudiated this when he expressly disavowed constructive treason, but this was not good enough for Lord Campbell, who roundly declared that 'it was thought better to resort to the law of "Constructive Treason" ... and therefore to insist that all who belonged to [these societies] were to be considered guilty of "Compassing the death of our Lord the King" and ought to die the death of traitors.'<sup>28</sup>

With the strength of such sentiment, the growing threat to reformists and all those with a genuine interest in reform, the menace of guilt by association, and the potential destruction of crucial networks and modes of sociability, it is understandable that Godwin felt compelled to write '[t]his is the most important crisis, in the history of English liberty, that the world ever saw' (*PPW* II, 98). Lord Campbell's words confirm the blurring of law that surrounded the case, and Godwin hits back at the imprisonment, spying, and climate of suspicion (mentioned two years earlier by Holcroft) which had now so evidently reached a terrifying peak. Godwin knew he was perilously close to finding himself 'guilty' and the threat of such an outcome gives the words of *Cursory Strictures* weight and meaning. It also makes sense of his decision to publish *Cursory Strictures* anonymously. What may at first be interpreted as an act of distancing oneself from friends, or of self-preservation, becomes one of sense and reason. Godwin, it would seem, could foresee that it was crucial that certain friends remain free to convey necessary messages to mankind, at least until such a time as his, or their own arrests might prove imminent. Godwin stresses the

---

<sup>28</sup> Wharam, *Treason Trials*, p. 272.

real-life fight that is occurring against suppression and tackles guilt by association when he writes:

The plain English of [Lord Chief Justice Eyre's] recommendation is this: 'Let these men be put upon trial for their lives; let them and their friends, through the remotest strainers of connection, be exposed to all anxieties incident to so uncertain and fearful a condition; let them be exposed to ignominy, to obloquy, to the partialities, as it may happen, of a prejudiced judge, and the perverseness of an ignorant jury: we shall then know how we ought to conceive of similar cases. By trampling upon their peace, throwing away their lives, or sporting with their innocence, we shall obtain a basis upon which to proceed, and a precedent to guide our judgment in future instances. This is a sort of language which it is impossible to recollect without horror' (*PPW* II, 96).

Again, Godwin more forcefully depicts friend and foe. Chillingly, a law of conjecture, of 'constructive treason,' means that something as important and virtuous as friendship becomes distorted, tainted, and a thing of threat. In his early manuscript 'Notes on Friendship' Godwin writes:

Which are the requisites to true friendship? They are nobleness of spirit, good-nature, good-sense, virtue and docility. Without these no useful, no intimate friendship can subsist. But when two persons, in whom these amiable qualities concentrate, engage in an union of this sort, the beholders are forced to confess it to be



what it really is the solace of life, the patron of virtue, and the finisher of an heroic character.<sup>29</sup>

This present government is happy to destroy a relationship, the basis of which is happiness and trust, choosing rather to endorse misery and misgiving. The ‘remotest strainers of connection’ should be severed and any who seek the ‘solace’ of friendship should be suspected of wrongdoing, cast out, shunned, ‘exposed to ignominy, to obloquy’ (PPW II, 96). Friendship should no longer be considered a source of comfort, a well-spring of happiness, a means of ‘developing an heroic character.’ In ‘Notes on Friendship’ Godwin goes on to observe that ‘many perhaps the greater part of mankind, wantonly exclude themselves from this grand source of felicity, by the unlimited indulgence of some foolish or vicious disposition, utterly incompatible with true friendship.’ How closely the words of his early manuscript relate to this passage in *Cursory Strictures* and the ‘foolish or vicious disposition,’ the distortion and ‘horror’ created by constructive treason.

Godwin runs with the notion of ‘Constructive Treason’ and convincingly highlights the ambiguity of the case, questioning how many fine lines would unwittingly be crossed if a verdict of guilty was reached, and innocent words were found, on a whim, to contain treasonable intent. He writes ‘[l]et us pause a moment, and consider the unexplored country before us. Every paragraph now presents us with a new treason, real or imaginary, pretendedly [sic] direct, or avowedly constructive. Division and subdivision rise upon us, and almost every one is concluded with the awful denunciation of treason’ (PPW II, 86). Godwin continues to outline the fragility of the case and notes that it is formed by the language and law of conjecture. The Chief Justice ‘is therefore obliged to leave the plain road, and travel

---

<sup>29</sup> ‘Notes on Friendship,’ MS Abinger, c. 36, fols. 40-4.

out of the record;’ he is ‘obliged to indulge himself in conjecture, as to what the prisoners may have done’ and what are ‘facts likely to be laid before the jury’ (*PPW* II, 85). Accentuating the speculation and guesswork in what was occurring, Godwin has already considered what it would be like to live under such a tenuous legal system:

Better it were to live under no law at all, and, by the maxims of cautious prudence, to conform ourselves the best we can to the arbitrary will of a master, than fancy we have a law on which we can rely, and find at last, that this law shall inflict a punishment precedent to the promulgation, and try us by maxims unheard of till the very moment of the prosecution. Where is the mark set upon this crime? Where the token by which I should discover it? It has lain concealed; and no human prudence, no human innocence, could save me from the destruction with which I am at present threatened (*PPW* II, 84).

Godwin begins this passage in terms of equality, the author/speaker is positioned as one with the reader ‘we,’ ‘ourselves,’ ‘us’. No man, woman, or child may know whether or not they have broken the law until the ‘moment of prosecution’ as no law is now fixed, and, alarmingly, is free to be invented at will. Eloquently, ‘we’ becomes ‘I’ and is deliberately positioned around two rhetorical questions. The effect is powerful, as having spoken as one with textual friends Godwin then speaks as the individual ‘I’. He creates a sense of ‘I/we’ — I speak for us all — instilling the sense that all must consider the implications of this case collectively as well as individually, never losing sight of the need for individual progress. Through *Cursory Strictures* Godwin could at once speak to the individual whilst simultaneously addressing the crowd.

Godwin did not have to look far for inspiration. His reading of Cicero demonstrated how the great orator instilled this particular rhetorical device. Twice in *Pro Roscio Amerino*, the ‘I Cicero’ smoothly becomes ‘I Roscius.’ Again, the effect is impressive, and creates greater empathy, and therefore sympathy with the wrong being done to Roscius by his uncles, who, should they win, would have succeeded in ensuring that Roscius was unlawfully killed, thereby corrupting politics and law.<sup>30</sup> Godwin utilises the same technique: empathy and sympathy simultaneously flow between speaker and reader in order to emphasise their shared vulnerability: ‘no human innocence, could save me [you/us] from the destruction with which I am [you/we are] at present threatened.’

Continuing to follow *disputio*, Godwin anticipates that certain people in his readership/audience may disagree with him and demonstrates that he is prepared to refute their probable arguments: *confutatio*. Consistently seeking precise evidence, and drawing attention to the fact that the aims of a proposed Convention for Parliamentary Reform have been so distorted as to paint a hot-bed of plot and treason, Godwin asks:

Did these associations plan the murder of the King, and the assassination of the royal family? Where are the proofs of it? But the authors of the present prosecution probably hope, that the mere names of Jacobin and Republican will answer their purposes; and that a Jury of Englishmen can be found who will send every man to the gallows without examination, to whom these appellations shall once have been attributed! (*PPW* II, 88).

---

<sup>30</sup> Cicero, *Pro Roscio Amerino*, pp. 18 and 54. Berry notes, ‘Cicero speaks in Roscius’ persona — an unusual and striking device.’ n. 32, p. 225.

Godwin uses rhetorical questions, one after the other, to accentuate the innocence of those accused — what is unquestionable — against the wrong-doing and intent of those prosecuting. Again, he relies on the classical techniques of Cicero who constantly vilified his opponents and exaggerated the virtues of his friends. What is notable about the comparison Godwin draws is that he is, in effect, separating himself and those accused from either those termed ‘Jacobin’ or ‘Republican.’ ‘Jacobin’ and ‘Republican’ are set against ‘Englishmen’ who ‘will send every man to the gallows without examination.’ Appealing to patriotism, Godwin effectively asks who are the true Englishmen — those who without proof would send a man to the gallows — or those who peacefully seek reform? Godwin boldly states that should Judge Eyre address the accused ‘in the frank language of sincerity’ (the language of reform, not law), ‘he must say’:

Six months ago you engaged in measures, which you believed conducive to the public good. You examined them in the sincerity of your hearts, and you admitted them with the full conviction of understanding. You adopted them from this ruling motive, the love of your country and mankind. You had no warning that the measures which you engaged were acts of High Treason: no law told you so; no precedent recorded it; no man existing upon the face of the earth could have predicted such an interpretation (*PPW* II, 99).

Godwin uses a ventriloquist’s device, such as can be found in classical oratory, putting words in the judge’s mouth. By momentarily becoming judge, Godwin effectively directs his readership and blurs the truth of law with that of reason, successfully highlighting the flaws in current legislation. He presents a judge who is happy to admit that it is the law, not the accused, that has failed. Godwin shows that like the

English Jacobin writers, those being held, believe with sincerity that they are the people's friends. He pits the Government, and this present law of no laws, against the people, stressing a sinister and murky area that governance and the legal system has waded into.<sup>31</sup> Using parody for a serious end, Godwin dramatizes the issue by impersonating the judge speaking to the accused. He seeds outrage and sympathy in his readers by putting words in the judge's mouth that reveal the injustice of the judge's/court's assumptions. Godwin succeeds in putting the public reader imaginatively in the place of the accused friend, thereby creating sympathy. Extending personal, and friendly speech out to the public, Godwin devises a radical sympathy that comprehends that any one, realistically, is at risk of being in the accused's situation. He demonstrates sympathetic imagination operating against the kind of imagination the government is accusing them of — imagining the king's death — not fantasies of regicide but sympathy and solidarity with the oppressed. Godwin refers to and seeks to develop the art of rhetoric when referring to Chief Justice Eyre's definition of what actually constitutes compassing and imagining the death of the King. Godwin writes:

There is a figure of speech, of the highest use to a designing and treacherous orator, which has not yet perhaps received a name in the labours of Aristotle, Quintilian, or Farnaby. I would call this figure *incroachment*. It is a proceeding, by which an affirmation is modestly insinuated at first, accompanied with considerable doubt and qualification; repeated afterwards, and accompanied

---

<sup>31</sup> Godwin had read Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1792. *Godwin's Diaries*, 'Texts Read'. Here, using the device of *memoria* he seems to draw from Antony's famous post-assassination speech 'Friends, Romans, countrymen' in which the judge's imagined words become ridiculous and unjust. William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* in, *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 2008), III. ii. 70, p. 1589.

with these qualifications; and at last asserted in the most peremptory and arrogant terms. It is thus that Chief Justice Eyre expresses himself, respecting a ‘conspiracy to overturn the Monarchy’ (*PPW* II, 92).

Using emotive rhetoric but claiming to be the voice of reason, while accusing his opponents of being unreasonable manipulators of rhetoric, Godwin goes on to state, in the form of a rhetorical question, ‘Can any play upon words be more contemptible?’ (*PPW* II, 92). Godwin effectively argues that it is prosecution, and Chief Justice’s imaginings that encompass the death of the King; his argument has developed passion and strength as he effectively calls Chief Justice an ‘arrogant’ and ‘treacherous orator’. Godwin asks his readership/audience how a system that fabricates truth is to be trusted. Play on words now constitutes treason and has become a means of toying with innocent men’s lives, finding innocent words on a whim guilty.

The *peroratio* is the closing part of the argument, which appeals to pathos. Godwin uses his final paragraph to engage his readers’ emotions, but at the same time aims to heighten the real horror about to be suffered by men of no proven crime. Cicero believes that a rhetor can do three things in this final step: sum up their arguments, cast anyone who disagrees in a negative light, and arouse sympathy for himself, his clients, or his case.<sup>32</sup> Godwin notes that, alarmingly, this experimental judge whose ‘sorts of treason’ are ‘the mere creatures of his own imagination,’ is ‘willing to dissect the persons that shall be brought before him, the better to ascertain the truth or falsehood of his pre-conceived conjunctures’ (*PPW* II, 95-6). Reaching out to those friends in society, Godwin appeals to conscience and asks, indirectly,

---

<sup>32</sup> Cicero writes: ‘The *peroration* is the end and conclusion of the whole speech, it has three parts, the summing up, the indignation or exciting of indignation or ill-will against the opponent, and the *conquestio* or the arousing of pity and sympathy.’ *De Inventione*, I. 98. 147.

whether they are happy to sit in the place of the Almighty and cast judgment; the implication is that under this ‘new-fangled treason’ any one of them may find themselves in the place of those accused. Should the verdict be guilty those who have considered themselves friends, and who have tried to act for the greater good, will ‘be hanged by the neck’, but taken down alive. Then, addressing those charged directly, again addressing the wider circle indirectly, Godwin dramatically concludes ‘*your privy members shall be cut off, and your bowels shall be taken out and burnt before your faces; your heads shall be severed from your bodies, and your bodies shall be divided into four quarters, which are to be at the King’s disposal; and the Lord have mercy on your souls*’ (PPW II, 100). ‘Your’ addresses the reader together with the accused and this positioning brings the vulnerability home. Their sentence is left hanging, as are the heavy thoughts such imagery and argument provoke. Godwin delivers a politics of sensibility based on imagining vulnerability to suffering at a crucial moment with monumental effect.

### **Friendship Triumphant: *Cursory Strictures* and the Greater Good**

*Cursory Strictures* was published anonymously. Both Godwin and Holcroft seem to have recognised that as long as Godwin remained free from charge he was at liberty to continue publishing, thereby ensuring the voice of those silenced by incarceration remained heard. In his freedom, Godwin was able to continue their cause; he could convey the radicals’ message of reform and record their plight. In the opinion of many, Godwin succeeded in his aims.<sup>33</sup> Horne Tooke

---

<sup>33</sup> Beedell and Harvey acknowledge that, ‘Quite apart from the quality of the argument, the fact that it took up virtually the entire issue of the *Morning Chronicle* was impressive, and indicative of the intense interest generated by the prosecutions.’ *Horne Tooke’s Prison Diary*, p. 16. Wharam, writing about Thomas Hardy’s acquittal (the first of the charged to be tried), records just such ‘intense interest’, and unwittingly demonstrates how Hardy was perceived as the people’s friend: ‘As soon as the foreman of the jury pronounced the words Not Guilty, the Old Bailey was rent with loud shouts of applause. The vast crowd which was waiting anxiously outside

voiced his disapprobation of *Political Justice*, but he would later commend Godwin's works, telling him that everything he wrote was better than the last: this may have been partly due to the great debt he, and many others believed they owed to *Cursory Strictures*.<sup>34</sup> On first reading *Cursory Strictures* in the *Morning Chronicle*, whilst still imprisoned in the Tower of London, 'Tooke, walking on Tower Parade, ignored the rule of silence, waved a newspaper above his head and called to Joyce, "By God, this lays Eyre completely on his back"''.<sup>35</sup> Tooke had then theatrically and impressively conducted his own trial, whilst Erskine graciously took a backseat and let him lead, and the witnesses included Charles James Fox and Prime Minister Pitt. Tooke did not learn that Godwin was actually the author of *Cursory Strictures* until a party at his home on 21 May 1795. As Godwin recalled, Tooke then led him to the head of the table and:

suddenly conveyed my hand to his lips, vowing that he could do no less by the hand that had given existence to that production. The suddenness of the action filled me with confusion; yet I must confess that when I looked back upon it, this homage thus expressed was more gratifying to me than all the applause I had received from any other quarter.<sup>36</sup>

---

heard the joyful sound: "and like an electric shock, or the rapidity of lightning, the glad tidings spread through the whole town, and were conveyed much quicker than the regular post could travel, to the most distant parts of the island, where all ranks of people were anxiously awaiting the result of the trial.'" *Treason Trials*, quoting Thomas Hardy, p. 192.

<sup>34</sup> Horne Tooke's response to *Political Justice* was that 'it was a "bad book" and would do a great deal of harm.' He believed in the improvement but retention of structured laws; while Godwin sought to abolish them. Marshall, *William Godwin*, p. 122, quoting from Charles Kegan Paul, *William Godwin Friends and Contemporaries*, I, p. 116. Also, in St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 217.

<sup>35</sup> Bewley, *Gentleman Radical*, p. 165. Note: 'Joyce' refers to the Revd. Jeremiah Joyce, 'Unitarian Preacher, tutor to Earl Stanhope's sons, member of the SCI' who was also one of the twelve indicted for high treason. Beedell and Harvey, *Horne Tooke's Prison Diary*, p. 118.

<sup>36</sup> Marshall, *William Godwin*, pp. 139-40, quoting from Charles Kegan Paul, *William Godwin Friends and Contemporaries*, I, p. 147. Also see St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 132; Bewley, *Gentleman Radical*, p. 186.



Horne Tooke was happy to remark that *Cursory Strictures* had saved his life. Although Godwin had published that work anonymously he had kept himself visibly aligned to those accused, visiting them whilst in custody, and attending the trials. When Holcroft had been acquitted and prevented from speaking in court he left the dock and took a seat next to Godwin.<sup>37</sup> What was a natural act, also held great significance, as a demonstration that the trials had not severed their friendship but had drawn them closer together and had in no way broken the strength of their beliefs. *Cursory Strictures* had shown that when society is threatened the principles of friendship are threatened also, but that, momentarily at least, friendship may emerge triumphant, and government be successfully portrayed as the enemy.

### **Affection in Friendship**

During the summer of 1795, with the Treason Trials behind them, Holcroft wrote a letter to Godwin from Clist in Devon, where he had been advised to sea bathe for health reasons.<sup>38</sup> Noticeably, Holcroft uses his letter to consider the affection he feels for his friend. As with Holcroft's letter written following his arrest and calling Godwin to his senses, Holcroft again acknowledges how their intimacy involves a sense of knowing. He urges Godwin to complete his second edition of *Political Justice* for fear both editions 'will be injured' should publication be delayed. Reading Holcroft's letter alongside a review he published of the first edition of *Political Justice* effectively signals an error in Godwin's original work and its failure to acknowledge the value of feeling. Holcroft's letter demonstrates how this was an area of discussion and deliberation for both men.

---

<sup>37</sup> Marshall, *William Godwin*, p. 139. For a sketch drawn by Sir Thomas Lawrence of Godwin and Holcroft sitting side by side at the trials see p. 138.

<sup>38</sup> Now Clyst Honiton, East Devon.

Holcroft's letter begins in quite graphic detail, as he shares the current state of his health and writes of how his leg broke in two after a fall from a stepladder. Holcroft describes the pain he incurred from the fall, how there was a question of whether his ribs had splintered, how the doctor felt it necessary to drain a basin of his blood, and how he still has gout. Not for the fainthearted, his letter is notable for such levels of intimacy, and for its chattiness.<sup>39</sup> The trouble Holcroft takes to describe events, and the pain and treatment that he endured as a result of his accident, follows the eighteenth-century precedent that 'one of the most powerful topoi of epistolarity was the convention that letters made the absent interlocutor present.'<sup>40</sup> Continuing in this vein, Holcroft tells Godwin that he has had reason to talk of him, he writes:

I have had occasion to talk of you, or rather of your essence, your Political Justice, and your Caleb. If you suppose I understand you, I need not tell you in what terms I spoke.— I sometimes doubt whether it be right, i.e. necessary, to declare sentiments of personal affection; yet I still seem more strongly to doubt whether it be right totally to omit such declarations: for impossible as it is that men sh<sup>d</sup> perceive utility, or if you will virtue, and not love it, yet, the temporary uncertainties to which the clearest minds appear to be subject may render declarations concerning our feelings necessary. To what accidents you or I shall hereafter be liable is more than either of us can *positively*

---

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Holcroft, 'Thomas Holcroft to William Godwin: concerning Holcroft's fall from a ladder: Gout; et al,' Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger, c. 2, fols. 101-2, <<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/1500-1900/abinger/images/Dep.c.511-221.jpg>>.

<sup>40</sup> Whitehouse, *Textual Culture*, p. 34. Holcroft wrote a letter to Godwin in 1797 whilst on a trip to Norfolk. Holcroft wishes to be remembered to their circles of friends, he writes: 'It was my intention to write, for I feel a kind of vacuity of heart, when I am deprived of the intercourse of my accustomed friends; but as I cannot write to them all, and as we have many friends in common, I think there are few whom you may not safely assure on my part that they have a turn in my thoughts.' *Memoirs*, p. 311.

determine; but it seems to me our minds have proceeded too far for there to be any *probability* that our sentiments respecting each other sh<sup>d</sup> suffer any great change. Still, if it be pleasure to remind each other that we deserve and possess something more than mutual esteem, I see no good motive for abstaining from the enjoyment of this pleasure.<sup>41</sup>

Holcroft speaks to Godwin in the language of friendship and of love: acknowledging the ‘pleasure in reminding each other that they deserve and possess something more than mutual esteem,’ positively recalls the person to mind, ‘makes the absent interlocutor present,’ and creates feelings of happiness. Significantly, Holcroft’s letter goes further as he describes the level of trust and of understanding they share ‘[i]f you suppose I understand you, I need not tell you in what terms I spoke.’ Speaking to others of *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams* is to speak of the substance, the ‘essence,’ of his friend. By doing so, Godwin becomes the ‘absent interlocutor’ and is made present through the person of an intimate: which again raises the ‘sentiments of personal affection’ described by Holcroft. To speak of his friend, through the principles of his written works, reveals levels of esteem and intimacy in their literary friendship: their shared working creates understanding that means that either can closely represent the other. Holcroft is able to speak of the ‘essence’ of his friend and uses his letter to examine how his own feelings, and his and Godwin’s shared feelings, enable them to understand ‘the nature and strength of [their] friendship’: ‘[i]t seems to me our minds have proceeded too far for there to be any *probability* that our sentiments respecting each other sh<sup>d</sup> suffer any great change.’ Their hearts and minds have combined, but as a later letter from Holcroft to Godwin

---

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Holcroft, ‘Thomas Holcroft to William Godwin: Concerning Holcroft’s Fall from a Ladder,’ fols 101-2. ‘Your Caleb’ refers to Godwin’s novel *Caleb Williams*.

demonstrates, friendship also involves becoming like the other: in dress, manner, even expression.

In 1797, whilst on a trip to Norfolk, Holcroft felt it right to accompany friends who were known to himself, Godwin, and Godwin's mother, to pay a visit to the latter. Holcroft describes his embarrassment as Godwin's mother and sister-in-law both mistook Holcroft for Godwin:

I had my spectacles on, and your sister-in-law ran to inform your mother that yourself and Mrs. Godwin were arrived. The old lady stood in the portico; the young one advanced; there was an anxious curiosity in their countenances, and your sister said, addressing herself to me, 'I think I know you sir' [...] Major Harwood relieved our embarrassment by announcing my name. The change of countenance, perhaps, could not have fully persuaded her that my face was actually yours, yet she seemed rather to trust to her hopes than to her recollection; and these being disappointed, an immediate blank took possession of her features, and the rising joy was damped.<sup>42</sup>

Holcroft's letter is a timely reminder of real distance and reliance on 'recollection' or drawn likeness. Nonetheless, it is striking how similar in appearance Godwin and Holcroft are in Thomas Lawrence's sketch of them sitting side by side at the Treason Trials, where both are wearing their 'spectacles'.<sup>43</sup> The hesitancy of both Godwin's mother and sister-in-law, the 'anxious curiosity in their countenances', points towards an indisputable physical likeness. St Clair notes that

---

<sup>42</sup> Holcroft, 'Thomas Holcroft to William Godwin: concerning a visit to Norfolk and Godwin's mother,' Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger, c. 3, fols. 70-71v, in <<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/1500-1900/abinger/images/Dep.c.511-23-1.jpg>>; published in Holcroft, *Memoirs*, p. 311.

<sup>43</sup> See 'Illustration 1' in, St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*; also shown in Wharam, *Treason Trials*, p. 228.

‘Godwin changed his style in 1794, although the date when the enlightenment gentleman was snipped into the radical intellectual is not recorded in his journal.’ St Clair continues, and Lawrence’s sketch also demonstrates that ‘[l]ike Holcroft [Godwin] now wore his hair neatly parted, neck length, and unpowdered. The two friends retained their clean clothes and fresh appearance, seeing no necessary connection between political egalitarianism and slovenliness of dress.’<sup>44</sup> Hair powder which was basically flour was beginning to be seen as an ‘unhygienic extravagance’ amongst a nation bearing the cost of war (the government introduced a tax on it in 1795). However, English radicals were happy to adopt the fashion of French revolutionaries, who ‘had been proud to wear their hair long and unpowdered to differentiate themselves from royalists and aristocrats whom they displaced.’<sup>45</sup> St Clair remarks, regarding Godwin and Holcroft, ‘[c]onnoisseurs of fashion would not have been able to tell that their liberal opinions differed in important respects from those of the revolutionary politicians with whom they consorted.’<sup>46</sup> Yet, as Godwin’s mother and sister-in-law found, Godwin and Holcroft’s likeness in dress, manner, even expression told of an intimacy and connectedness in friendship. Whilst Godwin remained focused on the individual, intimacy evidently affected certain likenesses.

Godwin and Holcroft recognise the willingness to assist a friend as being an intrinsic part of virtuous friendship. In ‘Notes on Friendship’ Godwin writes that ‘[o]ur benevolence also is improved by friendship. — Accustomed ardently to desire and eagerly to promote the welfare of our friend, we by an easy transition, remove our kind wishes and generous endeavours to others, and even in a manner to the whole species.’<sup>47</sup> Godwin’s and Holcroft’s intimacy is such that either can confidently speak of the other. Holcroft and

---

<sup>44</sup> St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 125.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, pp. 124-5.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Notes on Friendship,’ MS Abinger c. 36, fols. 40-4.

Godwin are aware of ‘the qualities that attract’ one another’s ‘affection,’ and as Holcroft acknowledges it is right sometimes to share ‘such declarations,’ in doing so, they ‘learn from their own feelings the nature and strength of friendship.’ Moreover, in the incident described by Holcroft where he has had occasion to speak of Godwin’s ‘essence’ — his ‘Political Justice and Caleb’ — Holcroft’s feelings and certain ‘declarations’ have helped him to transfer the language of radical friendship beyond their intimate relationship, and the radical circle, to a wider public. John Brewer has noted, concerning letter writing, that ‘sentiment was a spontaneous emotion, a feeling whose value did not depend upon its being observed by others. It came naturally from within, unlike the artifice and show of polite society. Behaviour intended to impress others rather than generated spontaneously was considered unnatural and artificial. Thus while politeness emphasized forms of public presentation in the creation of refinement sentiment stressed inner feeling.’<sup>48</sup> Holcroft seems to be developing the conventions of letter writing (and of Chapter Two, Book V in *Political Justice*) inwardly and outwardly, and acknowledges that the feeling that ‘came naturally from within’ caused him to speak of *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams* with ‘spontaneous emotion,’ and therefore unforced affection and passion; this effectively signalled the usefulness and goodness of the principles of both author and works.

With *Political Justice* still in mind, Holcroft adds an important postscript to his letter: ‘[h]ow came I to omit saying that you have a few warm admirers here; and that the report of your 2<sup>d</sup> edition has committed homicide upon the first? In my opinion, should the publishing be delayed both will be injured.’<sup>49</sup> Set within the context of

---

<sup>48</sup> Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 102.

<sup>49</sup> St Clair writes concerning *Political Justice*: ‘It was the first edition written in the hectic weeks before the outbreak of war in 1793 which established Godwin’s reputation and shaped his future life. Composed in a period of sustained excitement [...] it has a bright, forthright, visionary style which is lacking in the other editions. Many admirers continued to prefer the original despite the uncorrected flaws, seeing

this letter, Holcroft's warning is significant, as it appears that he is contemplating the changes Godwin deemed it necessary to make to his philosophical treatise concerning the value of feeling. Although their closeness is such that either 'need not tell the other in what terms they spoke,' and whilst Holcroft can speak knowingly of the principles of *Political Justice*, this is not to suggest that Holcroft agreed wholeheartedly with Godwin: Holcroft may have commended *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams*, but he would have openly discussed certain flaws.<sup>50</sup> Holcroft had already been charged with the task of reviewing the first edition of *Political Justice* for the *Monthly Review*. Although he is happy to write of 'no small degree of pleasure in announcing the present work to our readers, as one, which, from the freedom of its inquiry, the grandeur of its views, and the fortitude of its principles, is eminently deserving of attention', he is also careful to document errors, and differences of opinion.<sup>51</sup> Continuing, he writes:

By this eulogium, we would by no means be understood to subscribe to all the principles which these volumes contain. Knowledge is not yet arrived at that degree of certainty, which is requisite for any two men to think alike on all subjects; neither has language attained that consistent accuracy, which can enable them to convey their thoughts, even when they do think alike, in a manner perfectly correct and intelligible to both. These difficulties are only to be overcome by a patient, incessant, and benevolent investigation.<sup>52</sup>

---

it as the pure milk of Godwinism which was later watered down.' *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 70.

<sup>50</sup> W. M. Verhoeven sees Holcroft as 'more like an intellectual sparring partner to Godwin than an inspirational mentor.' 'General Introduction' in, *Novels and Selected Plays*, p. xi. Godwin writes: 'the political, as well as the intellectual state of man, may be presumed to be in a course of progressive improvement' (*PJ*, 16).

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Holcroft, 'Mr Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*,' *The Monthly Review* XI (1793), 187-196 (p. 196).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, X (1793), 311-201 (p. 311).

He concludes by acknowledging that '[t]here are passages, likewise, in which we discovered inconsistencies, either in the language or in the sentiments, as opposed to the opinions of the author in general: but these are so few as scarcely to require animadversion.'<sup>53</sup> Holcroft ensures that the better response is to commend *Political Justice*'s boldness and to praise Godwin's encouragement of mankind to partake in political enquiry and informed debate. In the interests of truth and impartiality, Holcroft feels it his duty to observe there are inconsistencies between what he knows of the author's beliefs and the flaws in the presentation of such beliefs. Holcroft's review, when read alongside his letter concerning the affection he feels for his friend, and of the report of Godwin's 'second edition of *Political Justice* committing homicide on the first,' effectively signals Godwin's error in neglecting the value of feeling in his original edition.

### **Dissenting Tensions, New Acquaintances, Reformed Beliefs**

In the second edition of *Political Justice* Godwin adds a preface in which he explains why he deems it necessary to produce a revised work. He realises that there are certain things that 'have been too hastily obtruded upon the reader' and he acknowledges that as such there are tensions that require revision: '[a]fter repeated revisals the jealous eye of a man habituated to the detection of errors, still discovers things that might be better' (*PPW* IV, 6). Godwin knows that he has allowed emphasis on the power of truth to overshadow that of feeling.

As Godwin moved away from the dissenting academy period of his life his circles of sociability developed, so that he discovers 'things that might be better' and recognises that he had not previously fully

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, XI, p. 196.



developed the value of feeling, choosing rather to let dissenting influences concerning the value of truth outweigh those of feeling. Philp has argued that new acquaintances: ‘did not challenge [Godwin’s] central belief that it is through the practice of private judgment and public discussion that we come to recognise and act upon moral truths.’<sup>54</sup> Rather, the new acquaintances brought vital practice to theory, so that Godwin could more fully realise his own beliefs. In later editions of *Political Justice*, Godwin can write, due to his own experiences of sociability, that ‘emotions are scarcely ever thrilling and electrical without something of social feeling’ (PPW IV, 159).

In 1800 Godwin reflects again on errors concerning truth outweighing feeling in his first edition and strongly blames his harsh Calvinist upbringing: ‘Sandemanianism, or an inattention to the principle that feeling, and not judgment, is the source of human actions.’ He also records the fault of the first edition’s ‘unqualified condemnation of the private affections,’ and continues, ‘it will easily be seen how strongly these errors are connected with the Calvinist system, which had been so deeply wrought into my mind in early life, as to enable these errors long to survive the general system of religious opinions of which they formed a part.’<sup>55</sup> Godwin realises that he is ‘wrong’ to have presented the perception of truth without any recognition of the power of feeling as the only means of acquiring moral principles. He notes that unfeeling Calvinism formed part of his error, but he also acknowledges his own ‘haste’ to record and publish. Only those things worthy ‘of the cause *Political Justice* intends to serve’ remain: Book V, and friendship as influenced by dissenting

---

<sup>54</sup> Philp. *Godwin’s Political Justice*, p. 169.

<sup>55</sup> William Godwin, *The Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, vol. I, ed. by Mark Philp (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 54.

academy models remain, feeling forms an essential part of such friendship and is necessary to develop moral reasoning.<sup>56</sup>

Holcroft had documented that there were inconsistencies in thought and presentation in *Political Justice*, and subsequent discussions helped Godwin to see how the influence of cold Calvinist doctrine and permissible dissenting feeling had affected the representation of truth and feeling in *Political Justice*. Holcroft encouraged Godwin to perceive the value of demonstrable affection and to realise this formed part of his own beliefs and had been written into *Political Justice*.

### **Enter Wollstonecraft and Greater Awareness of Private Affections**

As Holcroft's and Godwin's circles of sociability continued to develop, Godwin was destined to become reacquainted with Mary Wollstonecraft. Again, Godwin was forced to consider feeling in friendship as his and Wollstonecraft's relationship moved swiftly and they became lovers. Philp has rightly argued that:

The acknowledgement of feeling is not a consequence of Godwin's relationship with Mary Wollstonecraft but predates this relationship and may even be said to have prepared the ground for it. A similar account can be given for the further developments in Godwin's thought between the second and third editions [of *Political Justice*].<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Philp. *Godwin's Political Justice*, pp. 217-18. Pamela Clemit and Gina Luria Walker have similarly written: 'Godwin's intellectual reassessment gained further impetus from his relationship with Mary Wollstonecraft. Though it is sometimes asserted that she was the principal cause of his philosophical revisions, there is little evidence to support this view. When Godwin met Wollstonecraft again on 8 January 1796 at the house of a mutual friend, Mary Hays, he had already published the second edition of *Political Justice*.' Pamela Clemit and Gina Luria Walker,

Nonetheless, theory was once again challenged by practice and Godwin came to realise the true worth of Wollstonecraft's 'culture of the heart,' but was characteristically 'careful' to cultivate what he defined as 'passion of the mind' in order that passion met with reason.<sup>58</sup> Wollstonecraft also proved instrumental in Godwin's gradual foregrounding of the value of friendship that had previously been implicit but not explicit.

Godwin met Wollstonecraft again in January 1796, and their meeting was much more successful than the previous one. Godwin's diary records the tea party held at Mary Hays's, which included Holcroft. Unconventionally, Wollstonecraft later called on Godwin; they became correspondents, and then, in August of the same year, lovers. As Philp observes, 'their letters and notes provide a touching record of a philosophical relationship gradually subverted by feelings which Godwin found hard to accommodate intellectually and Wollstonecraft found hard to trust.'<sup>59</sup> Following one such struggle, Wollstonecraft had offered physical affection to Godwin, only as St Clair notes, 'to be mortified' when 'all she received was a lecture on the nature of feelings, a topic on which she rightly regarded her own experience as superior.'<sup>60</sup> Wollstonecraft sent Godwin a note telling him of her intention to revert to being alone, which spurred Godwin to his senses and to respond with feeling:

---

'Introduction' in, William Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. by Pamela Clemit and Gina Luria Walker (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001), p. 16, referring to Don Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason*, p. 139.

<sup>58</sup> Concerning Wollstonecraft's 'culture of the heart,' see Clemit and Walker, 'Introduction' in *Memoirs*, p. 31; also, Godwin, *Memoirs*, pp. 204-6.

<sup>59</sup> *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. For Wollstonecraft's letters to Godwin, see Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Collected Letters*, ed. by Janet Todd (London: Penguin, 2003); for Godwin's to Wollstonecraft see *GL I*. Clemit writes: 'On 13 July 1796, Godwin wrote his first letter to Wollstonecraft, beginning an intensive education in a 'new language' of feeling.' (*GL I*, xlv, quoting from *The Collected Letters*, p. 245).

<sup>60</sup> St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 166.

You do not know how honest I am. I swear to you that I told you nothing but the strict and literal truth, when I described to you the manner in which you set my imagination on fire on Saturday. For six and thirty hours I could think of nothing else. I longed inexpressibly to have you in my arms. Why did not I come to you? I am a fool. I feared still that I might be deceiving myself as to your feelings, and that I was feeding my mind with groundless presumptions [...] Send me word that I may call on you in a day or two. Do you not see, while I exhort you to be a philosopher, how painfully acute are my own feelings? I need some soothing, though I cannot ask it from you (*GL* I, 173-4).<sup>61</sup>

Godwin holds to his principle of speaking with absolute sincerity whilst exhibiting the tension between reason and feeling ‘[d]o you not see, while I exhort you to be a philosopher, how painfully acute are my own feelings?’ As theory meets practice, he expresses his own sense of vulnerability which accentuates the unfamiliar territory he finds himself in, and points once more to a rather cold past. In his later essay, ‘Of Love and Friendship,’ Godwin defines sentimental feeling, and in doing so, may be seen as adding description to his letter to Wollstonecraft: ‘[s]entiment is nothing, till you have arrived at a mystery and a veil, something that is seen obscurely, that is just hinted at in the distance, that has neither certain outline nor colour, but that is left for the mind to fill up according to its pleasure and in the best manner it is able’ (*PPW* VI, 187). Godwin needs time to contemplate, and in doing so, his mind will be ‘soothed’ as it reflects and ‘fills up’ and reason responds to the pleasure found in coupling intellectual stimulation and physical attraction. Godwin does not view such reflection as dampening emotion. In ‘Of Love and Friendship’ Godwin defines love in a way which is reminiscent of his letter to Wollstonecraft: ‘[b]y love it is my intention here to understand, not a

---

<sup>61</sup> Also quoted in St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, pp. 166-7.

calm, tranquil, and, as it were, half-pronounced feeling, but a passion of the mind' (*PPW* VI, 187). Philp notes how 'Godwin continues to reject "a brute and unintelligent sympathy", and he does so because his theory requires that when we are being benevolent or otherwise virtuous we are acting because we perceive the value of the activity [...] So sympathy is not simply a matter of emotion; it must also work in hand with the understanding.'<sup>62</sup> For Godwin, passionate love can so easily be inimical to friendship; for passionate love to succeed its basis must be intimate friendship which involves approval of what is truly good and worthy to be desired. Similarly, Wollstonecraft writes '[l]ove, the common passion, in which chance and sensation take place of choice and reason, is, in some degree, felt by the mass of mankind [...] but the security of marriage, allowing the fever of love to subside, a healthy temperature is thought insipid, only by those who have not sufficient intellect to substitute the calm tenderness of friendship, the confidence of respect, instead of blind admiration, and the sensual emotions of fondness.'<sup>63</sup>

As Godwin uses his letter to consider his and Wollstonecraft's private affection, he is careful to anchor their affection in friendship, thereby directing passionate feeling to something that is worthy and identifiable:

Upon consideration I find in you one fault, and but one. You have the feelings of nature, and you have the honesty to avow them. In all this you do well. I am sure you do. But do not let them tyrannise over you. Estimate every thing at its just value. It is best that we should be friends in every sense of the word; but in the mean time let us be friends (*GL* I, 174).

---

<sup>62</sup> Philp. *Godwin's Political Justice*, p. 204, quoting from *Political Justice*, p. 296.

<sup>63</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, ed. by Janet Todd (1792, 1790) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 96.

Intellectual friendship, and the affection felt in such friendship is the basis of any worthy relationship, and this is a principle that remains unchanged in *Political Justice*'s handling of private affections. The unaffected, 'spontaneous emotion' of worthy friendship involves feelings that are superior to those created by raw physical attraction and fleeting moments of gratification. Wollstonecraft wrote in response 'I like your last – may I call it *love* letter? better than the first – and can I give you a higher proof of my esteem than to tell you, the style of my letter will whether I will or no, that it has calmed my mind [...] I delight to view the grand scenes of nature and the various changes of the human countenance – Beautiful as they are animated by intelligence or sympathy – My affections have been more exercised than yours, I believe, and my senses are quick, without the aid of fancy – yet tenderness always prevails, which inclines me to be angry with myself, when I do not animate and please those I [love].'<sup>64</sup>

In the first edition of *Political Justice*, Godwin writes:

The intercourse of the sexes will in such a state fall under the same system as any other species of friendship. Exclusively of all groundless and obstinate attachments, it will be impossible for me to live in the world without finding one man of a worth superior to that of any other whom I have an opportunity of observing. To this man I shall feel a kindness in exact proportion to my apprehension of his worth. The case will be precisely the same with respect to the female sex. I shall assiduously cultivate the intercourse of that woman whose accomplishments shall strike me in the most powerful manner (*PJ*, 447).

---

<sup>64</sup> *The Collected Letters*, p. 350.

Godwin goes on to describe how other men may also be attracted to the same woman and that this is perfectly acceptable should all parties consent: he speaks of mutual intellectual gratification, and notes that 'it is the mark of the extreme depravity of our present habits, that we are inclined to suppose sensual intercourse any wise material to the advantages arising from the purest affection.' Friendship is the 'purest affection' and when two of like-mind feel it right, then they might 'propagate their species, not because a certain sensible pleasure is annexed to this action, but because it is right the species should be propagated; and the manner in which they exercise this function will be regulated by the dictates of reason and duty' (*PJ*, 447-8). Godwin changes the above passage in subsequent editions to omit the section concerning propagation. The 'intercourse of the sexes' is handled in a more subtle way than the first edition, but Godwin is careful to re-emphasise essential equality and choice, away from 'conditions and laws of marriage,' when he writes 'it is a question of some moment whether the intercourse of the sexes, in a reasonable state of society, would be promiscuous, or whether each man would select for himself a partner to whom he will adhere as long as that adherence shall continue to be the choice of both parties' (*PPW IV*, 339). Without reference to other men's attraction for the same woman there is a greater sense of rationale and choice amongst two consenting parties, whose ambition is to remain together, as long as both remain happy to do so. Too many marriages are made in haste, or worse arranged, so that prospective spouses lack worthy sentiment and are left to live a life of regret.<sup>65</sup> For this reason, in the second and third editions of *Political Justice* 'marriage, as now understood [remains] a monopoly, and the worst of all monopolies' (*PPW IV*, 338). Emphasis should be

---

<sup>65</sup> In *Political Justice* Godwin writes: 'But the evil of marriage as it is practised in European countries lies deeper than this. The habit is, for a thoughtless and romantic youth of each sex to come together, to see each other for a few times and under circumstances full of delusion, and then to vow to each other eternal attachment. What is the consequence of this? In almost every instance they find themselves deceived. They are reduced to make the best of an irretrievable mistake' (*PJ*, 446).

upon friendship not marriage, for friendship is based upon essential equality and choice and therefore brings union of a higher worth.

However, at present, Godwin recognises that such thought is too revolutionary for society to adopt, he observes that currently ‘all these arguments are calculated to determine our judgement in favour of marriage as a salutary and respectable institution, but not at that species of marriage in which there is no room for repentance and to which liberty and hope are equally strangers’ (*PPW* IV, 339). As with his letter to Wollstonecraft, feeling has its place, but the feelings of friendship are greater than sensual feeling:

Friendship, if by friendship we understand that affection for an individual which is measured singly by what we know of his worth, is one of the most exquisite gratifications, perhaps one of the most improving exercises, of a rational mind. Friendship therefore may be expected to come in aid of the sexual intercourse, to refine its grossness, and increase its delight (*PPW* IV, 338-9).

‘Sentiment, a spontaneous emotion, a feeling whose value [does] not depend upon its being observed by others,’ does not require marriage as it ‘does not depend upon its being observed by others.’<sup>66</sup> Godwin understands such love as ‘not a calm, tranquil, as it were half-pronounced feeling, but a passion of the mind’: this meeting of minds increases sexual delight and outlasts moments of physical pleasure (*PPW*, VI, 187). Again, friendship is the ‘purest affection’; it involves shared intellect and understanding, which generates the recognition of true worth, creating feelings of esteem, and bringing union of a higher worth. Marriage does not involve ownership, and with friendship as its basis must be a relationship of essential equality, of shared reason:

---

<sup>66</sup> In *Memoirs* Godwin can write: ‘I think I may venture to say, that no two persons ever found in each other’s society a satisfaction more pure and refined. What it was in itself, can now only be known, in its full extent, to the survivor.’ (p. 170.)



‘[c]ertainly no ties ought to be imposed on either party, preventing them from quitting the attachment, whenever their judgement directs them to quit it.’<sup>67</sup>

### Overcoming Problems with Co-habitation

Godwin and Wollstonecraft married when Wollstonecraft fell pregnant because, as Philp observes, ‘middle-class morality was rapidly gaining shape.’<sup>68</sup> Failure to marry would have resulted in rejection from many, including those who formed part of the ‘liberal and intellectual circles of London,’ who still deemed marriage ‘a necessary condition.’<sup>69</sup> Although they chose to marry, Godwin and Wollstonecraft worked hard to maintain their independence and took separate lodgings and carried on in their own circles of sociability, returning home to be together later in the day.<sup>70</sup> In each edition of *Political Justice* and his *Enquirer* (1797) Godwin outlines problems with cohabitation and argues that couples are at risk of smothering one another if they are too much in each other’s company. In later editions

---

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Wollstonecraft helped her own sister, Eliza, to escape a disastrous marriage. As Janet Todd observes, a particular letter to her sister Everina, written whilst staying with the clergyman schoolteacher Henry Gabell and his new wife, sees Wollstonecraft ‘cast a jaundiced eye on the couple’s married bliss, revealing in the process her own ambivalent attitude to coupledness and domesticity, as well as her awareness of her own intellectual gifts: “Whenever I read Milton’s description of paradise – the happiness, which he so poetically describes fills me with benevolent satisfaction – yet, I cannot help viewing them, I mean the first pair – as if they were my inferiors – inferiors because they could find happiness in a world like this – A feeling of the same kind frequently intrudes on me here – Tell me, does it arise from mistaken pride or conscious dignity which whispering me that my soul is immortal & should have a nobler ambition leads me to cherish it?”’ ‘Introduction’ in *The Collected Letters*, p. xxiv. Concerning her decision to marry, in *Memoirs* Godwin states that Wollstonecraft ‘had an extreme aversion to be made the topic of vulgar discussion.’ p. 161.

<sup>69</sup> See Philp. *Godwin’s Political Justice*, pp. 184-92. In *Memoirs* Godwin reveals how ‘we then judged it proper to declare our marriage, which had taken place a little before. The principal motive for complying with this ceremony, was the circumstance of Mary’s being in a state of pregnancy. She was unwilling, and perhaps with reason, to incur that exclusion from society of many valuable and excellent individuals, which custom awards in cases of this sort. I should have felt an extreme repugnance to the having caused her such inconvenience.’ p. 162.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Godwin took a separate room for work at 7 Evesham Buildings, where he began work on revisions for the third edition of *Political Justice* (1798)’, *GL* I, xlv.

of *Political Justice* Godwin argues that ‘cohabitation is also inimical to that fortitude which should accustom a man, in his actions as well as in his opinions, to judge for himself, and feel competent to the discharge of his own duties’ (*PPW* IV, 337).<sup>71</sup> For relationships involving co-habitation to have any chance of survival a healthy balance must be sought, and vital time set aside for individual pursuits, for reading, and reflection. In the *Enquirer* Godwin writes ‘excessive familiarity is the bane of social happiness.’<sup>72</sup> Evidently there is danger in having too much of a good thing and Godwin recognises that there are times ‘ill-humours’ and ‘fits of peevishness’ have the potential to put unnecessary strain on the best of relationships: sometimes it is necessary to retire and work through individual emotions. Absence allows individual time to reflect and prevent rash and potentially damaging actions. Evidently, theory and practice did not always work. St Clair notes how Wollstonecraft cautioned Godwin ‘after a tiff that total sincerity in marriage was incompatible with the present state of reason. “A husband is a convenient part of the furniture of a house,” she assured him when he went away for a few days, “unless he be a clumsy fixture. I wish you, from my soul, to be rivetted in my heart; but I do not desire to have you always at my elbow.”’<sup>73</sup> Importantly, essential time apart also provides time to reflect on the feelings each has for the other. When Godwin and Wollstonecraft were reacquainted, Godwin rather swiftly left for Norfolk to visit the Aldersons and in *Memoirs* he records how he and Wollstonecraft both benefitted from this time apart: ‘[t]he temporary satisfaction attendant upon my little journey, had its effect on the mind of both parties. It gave space for the maturing of

---

<sup>71</sup> Godwin has changed this from the first edition where he writes: ‘Cohabitation is not only an evil as it checks the independent progress of mind; it is also inconsistent with the imperfections and propensities of man’ (*PJ*, 446).

<sup>72</sup> William Godwin, ‘Essay X: Of Cohabitation’ in, *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners and Literature, in a Series of Essays* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1797), p. 86.

<sup>73</sup> St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 173, quoting from Elizabeth Robbins Pennell, *Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin*, 1885, p. 204.

inclination. I believe that, during this interval, each furnished the other the principal topic of solitary and daily contemplation. Absence bestows a refined and aerial delicacy upon affection, which it with difficulty acquires in any other way.<sup>74</sup> Again, Godwin cultivates a ‘passion of the mind’ that responds to Wollstonecraft’s ‘culture of the heart’ and promotes reflection on that which is truly good and worthy to be desired.

Both Godwin and Wollstonecraft believed in crafting out time for themselves; significantly, they recognised that it was vital to set aside time for their individual literary pursuits.<sup>75</sup> Literature was at the heart of their relationship and Godwin acknowledges that ‘[w]hatever may be thought, in other respects, of the plan we laid down to ourselves, we probably derived a real advantage from it, as to the constancy and uninterruptedness of our literary pursuits.’<sup>76</sup> Had Godwin and Wollstonecraft devoted too much time to themselves, their friendship would have been denied to others since their literary production would have waned and this carried vital messages of truth to potential friends of reform, beyond their known acquaintance.<sup>77</sup>

Whilst individual time was needed to write, the sharing of ideas and manuscripts and the receipt of constructive criticism were an important part of overseeing a work’s successful completion. Therefore, there had to be a place for shared friendships, as Godwin observes in *Memoirs*: ‘[i]n addition to our domestic pleasures, I was fortunate enough to introduce [Wollstonecraft] to some of my acquaintance of both sexes, to whom she attached herself with the ardour of approbation and friendship.’<sup>78</sup> Holcroft was already an acquaintance of Wollstonecraft’s, and there is speculation that he may

---

<sup>74</sup> Godwin, *Memoirs*, p. 158.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, pp. 173-4.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p. 174.

<sup>77</sup> Godwin writes: ‘Ours was not an idle happiness, a paradise of selfish and transitory pleasures.’ Ibid, p. 173.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p. 172.

have made an earlier marriage proposal to her.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, Holcroft's letter of 26 July 1797 concerning his visit to Godwin's mother demonstrates how his friendship with Godwin also included Wollstonecraft:

If you, or Mrs Godwin, or both, can but prevail on yourself, or selves, to endure the fatigue of writing to me I hope I need not use many words to convince you of the pleasure it will give me. And be it understood that this letter is addressed to you both whatever the direction on the back may affirm to the contrary. Professions are almost impertinent; and yet I am almost tempted to profess to you how sincerely and seriously I am interested in your happiness. But, as I am sure my words would ill describe my thoughts, I shall forbear. Pray inform me, sweet lady, in what state is your novel? And on what, courteous sir, are you employed? Tho' I am idle myself, I cannot endure that any body else should be so.<sup>80</sup>

His 'profession' of interest is touching as he seeks to convey emotional connection and the concern he feels for his friends' joint well-being. Eager to show his understanding of Godwin and Wollstonecraft's shared principles, Holcroft gallantly assumes his accustomed voice of actor and playwright when he bids the 'sweet lady' and 'courteous sir' to share news of their current literary undertakings. The mock chivalric tone successfully lightens the reference to Godwin and Wollstonecraft's controversial union, whilst the phrase paying homage to their individual pursuits. Holcroft situates himself inside their circle: his reference to Wollstonecraft's novel reveals how each was aware of, and closely involved in each other's current literary endeavours; Holcroft is also eager to hear of

---

<sup>79</sup> See St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 162.

<sup>80</sup> As above.

Godwin's current literary quest. Whilst Holcroft is unable to devote time to a work of his own, he seeks intellectual stimulation and wishes to remain an active part of his friends' literary endeavours. Certain feelings Holcroft and Wollstonecraft share for Godwin create their own form of understanding, added to which is a combined literary interest, all of which enriches the circle of friendship.

Although there had to be room for shared friendships, Godwin and Wollstonecraft recognised that it was also important to maintain individual friendships. Godwin saw Holcroft alone, as well as in company with Wollstonecraft.<sup>81</sup> In *Memoirs* Godwin documents his and Wollstonecraft's conscious decision to break with current modes of etiquette: '[w]e agreed in condemning the notion, prevalent in many situations in life, that a man and his wife cannot visit in mixed society, but in company with each other; and we rather sought occasions of deviating from, than complying with, this rule.'<sup>82</sup> Marriage or cohabitation must not prevent the acknowledgement of other intimate friendships. 'Excessive familiarity was the bane of social happiness' and to always have a spouse present again smothered and prohibited crucial individual contact with close friends.<sup>83</sup> There was a balancing act to perfect, but crucially, when friendship was the basis of a marital relationship its value was recognised more broadly.

Clemit and Gina Luria Walker have written of how the final two chapters of Godwin's *Memoirs* trace 'the growth of [Godwin and Wollstonecraft's] egalitarian affection. [Godwin] describes how he was gradually initiated through her love for him into new modes of thinking and feeling, which became the basis of a shared "experiment" in revolutionary domesticity, untrammelled by legal institutions.'<sup>84</sup> When Wollstonecraft died, Godwin published his *Memoirs* of her and

---

<sup>81</sup> Godwin's diary shows the frequency with which he still saw Holcroft, separate from Wollstonecraft.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, pp. 173-4.

<sup>83</sup> Godwin, *The Enquirer*, p. 86.

<sup>84</sup> Clemit and Walker, 'Introduction' in *Memoirs*, p. 22.

was careful to comment on their successful reacquaintance: '[w]hen we met again, we met with new pleasure [...] It was friendship melting into love.' He continues 'the sort of connection of which I am here speaking, between persons with whom the intercourse of the mind, and not sordid and casual gratification, is the object proposed, is certainly the most important choice in the departments of private life.'<sup>85</sup> In the second and third editions of *Political Justice* Godwin writes that 'passion is so far from being incompatible with reason, that it is inseparable from it. Virtue, sincerity, justice, and all those principles which are begotten and cherished in us by a due exercise of reason, will never be very strenuously espoused, till they are ardently loved; that is, till their value is clearly perceived and adequately understood. In this sense nothing is necessary, but to show us that a thing is truly good and worthy to be desired, in order to excite in us a passion for its attainment' (*PPW* IV, 39-40). Godwin continued to wrestle with the idea that marriage is a bond for life and was keen to emphasise that it must be a matter of choice. Friendship remains the purest affection and is the basis of any worthy relationship. In Wollstonecraft's *Memoirs* he writes 'I had never loved till now; or, at least, had never nourished a passion to the same growth, or met with an object so consummately worthy.'<sup>86</sup> Wollstonecraft writes in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* that 'the most perfect education, in my opinion, is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and form the heart.'<sup>87</sup> Wollstonecraft emerged for Godwin from behind the 'mystery and the veil' and was the substance, the 'essence' of sentiment. In *Memoirs* Godwin writes '[a] companion like this, excites and animates the mind [...] Her taste awakened mine; her sensibility determined me to a careful development of my feelings.'<sup>88</sup> Stress must be put on Godwin's use of

---

<sup>85</sup> Godwin, *Memoirs*, pp. 158-9.

<sup>86</sup> Godwin, *Memoirs*, pp. 158-60.

<sup>87</sup> Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 86.

<sup>88</sup> Godwin, *Memoirs*, pp. 204-5.

‘careful’ here. He uses *Memoirs* to acknowledge his own emphasis on reason and Wollstonecraft’s immense capacity to feel and to be led by feelings. What is fascinating about Godwin’s and Wollstonecraft’s relationship is how passion met with reason and how theory and practice combined. Wollstonecraft helped Godwin to develop and better understand his own beliefs: their friendship was formed out of ‘a passion of the mind’ and the ‘purest affection’ which resulted in a union of higher worth.

***Fleetwood: Or, The New Man of Feeling (1805)***

In his novel *Fleetwood*, Godwin continues to highlight intellectual friendship as the basis of any worthy relationship. He uses the marriage between Casimir Fleetwood and Mary Macneil to illustrate ‘friendship melting into love,’ but also to examine the difficulties of cohabitation, and of reconciling oneself to a relationship that is not one of ownership, but which is legally binding. Fleetwood’s and Mary’s ‘connection’ ensures that their friendship, which is based on ‘the intercourse of the mind,’ enables marriage to succeed because it has become a matter of choice. Whilst Fleetwood can claim the friendship of many, he finds himself longing at one point, for ‘a friend, who is to me as another self.’<sup>89</sup> He is fortunate enough to gain intimate friendship with Monsieur Ruffigny, and Mr Macneil and these friendships are contrasted with those on offer in the literary clubs of London, where men of letters have become fixated on matters of reputation, rank, and hierarchy. Whilst Godwin still recognises the importance of small circles of intellect, such circles are more evidently drawn from domestic connections. Where society is failing, Godwin more fully recognises the value of domestic links and affection, so that Wollstonecraft’s effect is part of larger sets of relationships.

---

<sup>89</sup> William Godwin, *Fleetwood, Or The New Man of Feeling* (1805), ed. by Gary Handwerk and A. A. Markley (Ontario: Broadview, 2001), p. 229.

Fleetwood begins his own story by reflecting upon his early childhood and solitary upbringing in a remote part of Wales. Marilyn Butler notes that ‘the novel’s subtitle, *The New Man of Feeling*, points to Godwin’s revisionist purpose in a mode which is ‘apparently autobiographical but in spirit critical, itself introverted in pursuit of a critique of introversion.’<sup>90</sup> Living with a father who fails to come to terms with the death of ‘the amiable and affectionate partner of his days,’ Fleetwood recollects that ‘I had few companions. The very situation which gave us a full enjoyment of the beauties of nature, inevitably narrowed both the extent and variety of our intercourse with our own species. My earliest years were spent among mountains and precipices, amidst the roaring of the ocean and the dashing of waterfalls.’<sup>91</sup> Fleetwood’s acute sense of place within the natural world leads him to acknowledge his tendency to be led by emotion rather than reason. Gary Handwerk and A. A. Markley observe that:

Fleetwood’s father errs first in permitting arrangements that allow Fleetwood’s sensibility to develop unchecked, so that his feelings are never brought under the control of reason, but routinely indulged for their own sake. He is never brought to recognize his dependence upon others or to acknowledge his inferiority to them in any respect [...] He is, in short, never led to recognize that he is a social being. The consequence of this is that Fleetwood is wholly unprepared to preserve any moral balance when he finds himself in the twin pitfalls to moral sensibility – college and Paris.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> Butler, ‘Satire and the Images of Self in the Romantic Period: The Long Tradition of Hazlitt’s *Liber Amoris*,’ *Yearbook of English Studies*, 14 (1984), 220, quoted in Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 95.

<sup>91</sup> *Fleetwood*, p. 53.

<sup>92</sup> *Fleetwood*, pp. 26-7. Similarly, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft observes that ‘in youth the seeds of every affection should be sown, and the respectful regard, which is felt for a parent, is very different from the social affections that are to constitute the happiness of life as it advances. Of these equality is the basis.’ p. 242.



Although his father's benevolent nature and treatment of tenants and employees remains an example for Fleetwood, when he recounts tales from his time as a student at Oxford he recognises that 'my experience at the university had killed the purity and delicacy of my moral discrimination.'<sup>93</sup> He realises how acting on emotion, rather than exercising individual reason, caused him to become led by the crowd, often to the cost of unsuspecting victims whose humiliation became his and his contemporaries' entertainment. Fleetwood withdraws from these activities only when brutal humiliation results in a student's suicide. As Handwerk observes, 'sympathy is operative here in only a negative sense, producing a fellowship of mockery that impels the students collectively towards an excess of abuse that they might not otherwise have reached.'<sup>94</sup> Still focusing on a 'negative sense of sympathy' and driven by an unhealthy desire to fit in, Fleetwood finds his way to the French court where embracing conventions of the court, he gives in to raw, unreasoned passion and takes for himself married and widowed mistresses. Learning of his son's behaviour at Oxford and in Paris, Fleetwood's father has the presence of mind to write to an old family friend Monsieur Ruffigny, whom Fleetwood visits whilst taking time away from the French court. Whilst with Ruffigny, Fleetwood learns not only of the strength of the connection between the house of Ruffigny and that of Fleetwood, but also of his own father's death. Handwerk and Markley write that '[t]he news of his father's death is then meant to impress upon Fleetwood's mind his own lapse from [...] high ideals. This method does indeed cure Fleetwood's tendencies toward dissipation, his active participation in

---

<sup>93</sup> *Fleetwood*, p. 99. Again, similarly, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft writes: 'When [children] are brought up at home, [...] they there acquire too high an opinion of their own importance, from being allowed to tyrannize over servants, and from the anxiety expressed by most mothers, on the score of manners, who, eager to teach the accomplishments of a gentleman, stifle, in their birth, the virtues of a man.' p. 242.

<sup>94</sup> Gary Handwerk, 'Mapping Misogyny: Godwin's *Fleetwood* and the Staging of Rousseauvian Education,' *Studies in Romanticism*, 41.3 (2002), 375-98.

the corruption of society.’<sup>95</sup> Ruffigny impresses on Fleetwood the idea that he has, in him, another father, thereby offering Fleetwood ‘a friend who is another self.’ Ruffigny also informs Fleetwood of his intention to accompany him back to the family estate in Wales to settle the accounts of his father. The friendship of Ruffigny proves to be that of a devoted friend and mentor and Fleetwood acknowledges that ‘from this period I became an altered man.’<sup>96</sup> The moral uprightness of Ruffigny and his devotedness to the family of Fleetwood forces Fleetwood to acknowledge the error of his ways and to attempt to embrace his better side. Whilst under the care and friendship of Ruffigny, Fleetwood was ‘unequivocally a gainer.’<sup>97</sup>

Following the death of Ruffigny and having grown tired of the country, Fleetwood goes to London where he looks forward to ‘frequenting the society of men of genius,’ only to be disappointed by what he finds there.<sup>98</sup> He observes how many men of opulent class sensibly seek ‘the intercourse of men of literature’ from a lower rank in society. However, snobbery and foolishness obstruct the true benefit of conversation as, although their intentions are good, envy inevitably causes men of status to shun ‘such intimates, because they could not bear to be outdone by persons poorer than themselves.’<sup>99</sup> Alarming, Fleetwood also finds that genuine men of letters, who exhibit ‘liberal tempers’ and a ‘certain nobility of disinterestedness of sentiment’ and who are ‘anxious for the promotion of individual and general advantage’, are now few. They have been replaced by literary men who are ‘as jealous of their fame and superiority, as the opulent men, their neighbours, were of the preservation and improvement of their estates.’<sup>100</sup> Having lost their thirst for true cause, for ‘individual and general advantage,’ such men have become artful and artificial in

---

<sup>95</sup> *Fleetwood*, p. 27.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, p. 213.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, p. 215.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, p. 219.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, p. 220.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*.

their conversation: their sole aim is to gain personal repute.<sup>101</sup>

O'Shaughnessy has argued that this is not Godwin in a 'static' or 'pessimistic withdrawal, but rather as facilitating a pragmatic and invigorated recalibration of a sustained intellectual commitment to the proliferation of political justice in a changing world.' O'Shaughnessy further observes that 'it would appear that [Godwin] steps back from the combative conversable world of the eighteenth century and he embraces further the "robust print culture" of the nineteenth.'<sup>102</sup>

Godwin uses *Fleetwood* to condemn as lost causes that used to burn at the centre of small gatherings and societies across the metropolis and beyond. However, he utilises a 'robust print culture' to demonstrate how intimate friendship and the domestic circle may continue to carry the cause for reform.

Although Fleetwood's experience of London leaves him feeling more isolated and alone, it helps him better to understand the value of true friendship: 'I saw that I was alone, and I desired to have a friend.'<sup>103</sup> Fleetwood acknowledges that he has many 'friends' who are convinced of his principles and integrity and who trust him, but he questions:

But, what sort of a friend is it whose kindness shall produce a conviction in my mind that I do not stand alone in the world? This must be a friend, who is to me as another self, who joys in all my joys, and grieves in all my sorrows, not with a joy or grief that looks like a compliment, not with a sympathy that changes into smiles when I am no longer present, though my head continues bent to the earth with anguish.<sup>104</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> O'Shaughnessy, 'Caleb Williams and the Philomaths,' p. 447.

<sup>103</sup> *Fleetwood*, p. 229.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, pp. 229-30.

Fleetwood's reflections are further proof of the positive and lasting influence of Ruffigny. No longer content with the empty professions of friendship made at court, or in London society, Fleetwood longs for a friend whose 'sympathy' does not 'change into smiles when I am no longer present, though my head continues bent to the earth with anguish.' Godwin uses *Fleetwood* to continue to highlight intellectual friendship as the basis of any worthy relationship.

In his search for such a friend, Fleetwood writes '[h]ow many disappointments did I sustain in the search after a friend!' He finds that men are too busy and have become self-absorbed and distant from one another, so that they no longer have 'leisure' for intimate friendship.<sup>105</sup> This was a hazard Godwin had sought to address in his first edition of *Political Justice*, where he had written '[h]uman beings should meet together, not to enforce, but to enquire [...] true wisdom is but adapted to a slow, unvarying, incessant progress' (*PJ*, 120 & 115). Fleetwood grapples with the 'tension between self-reliance and sociability,' but as he develops greater awareness of social being he acknowledges that he 'had so impatient a thirst for friendship' and recognises that it was 'essential to my happiness.'<sup>106</sup> Godwin knows, and uses *Fleetwood* to show that intimate, intellectual friendship is necessary to keep the quest for political justice alive:

It should seem almost impossible for any one to be a firm believer, if there are no other persons in the world of the same sect as himself. However worthy and valuable he may endeavour to consider himself, his persuasion will be attended with little confidence and solidity, if it does not find support in the judgments of other men. The martyr, or the champion of popular pretensions, cheerfully encounters the terrors of a public

---

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Quoting Handwerk and Markley, *Fleetwood*, p. 26; *Fleetwood*, p. 231.

execution, provided the theatre on which he is to die is filled with his approvers. And, in a few, or in one, will sometimes compensate the less conspicuous complacency of thousands.<sup>107</sup>

At forty-five years of age, Fleetwood longs for the friendship found amongst true men of reform. No longer led by the unthinking crowd, he seeks contentment in the form of an intimate with a shared cause. Fleetwood is no longer interested in ‘pretended friendship.’<sup>108</sup> Without any desire to return to the reckless man of youth at Oxford and Paris, or to London, or the isolation of home, he travels to ‘the lakes of Westmorland and Cumberland’ where he seeks the friendship of a man of worth, Macneil.<sup>109</sup>

### **Friendship and the Prospect of Marriage**

Godwin uses the friendship between Fleetwood and Macneil to demonstrate the type of frank and honest discourse which forms a crucial part of his model of friendship. Noting the difference between his friendship with Ruffigny and that of Macneil, Fleetwood writes:

Ruffigny and Macneil were the only two men I ever knew, the clearness of whose thinking was an ever fresh source of delight [...] But in the society of Macneil my happiness was even purer than in that of my father’s friend. Ruffigny, gallant, noble-hearted mortal as he was, stood alone; my intercourse with him was a perpetual *tête-à-tête*, and had too much of monotony and uniformity for the unsatisfied cravings of the human mind; but to return home with Macneil, after a morning’s temperate and sober

---

<sup>107</sup> *Fleetwood*, p. 232.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, p. 233.

<sup>109</sup> For an informative discussion of the lasting effects of Godwin’s friendships with Coleridge and Wordsworth see, Kelly, ‘Fleetwood’ in, *The English Jacobin Novel*, pp. 239-43.

discussion, and to see him surrounded with his blameless wife and accomplished daughters, what could the heart of man look for more?<sup>110</sup>

Fleetwood 'soberly discusses' with Macneil 'the sickly sensibility of my temper, the early disgust I had taken at the world, and the miserable sense of desolation which preyed upon my life, in my detached and unconnected situation.'<sup>111</sup> He is able to reflect that 'many were the debates that passed between me and my host respecting the true estimate of the human species.'<sup>112</sup> Here, the reader is shown the workings of intimate friendship that are essential for mankind to progress: Godwin shows that there is still a place for 'the collision of mind with mind.' Whilst he still recognises the importance of small circles of intellect, such circles are more evidently drawn from domestic connections. Where society is failing, Godwin more fully recognises the value of domestic links and affection, so that Wollstonecraft's effect is part of larger sets of relationships. It is not only the friendship of Macneil, but also that of Macneil's family that takes effect on Fleetwood: 'I never saw a family that excited in me so much approbation. Individuals I had encountered of great worth and extraordinary qualifications; but here was a whole circle of persons, such as a man would wish to spend his life with: so much concord of affection without any jarring passions; so much harmony of interests, yet each member of the family having a different pursuit.'<sup>113</sup> When Macneil tells Fleetwood, 'You are too much alone [...] There is a principle in the heart of man which demands the society of his like,' Fleetwood is better able to understand Macneil's argument.

---

<sup>110</sup> *Fleetwood*, p. 259.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, p. 247.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, p. 248.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 246-7.

Nevertheless, Fleetwood is still taken aback at Macneil's solution, which is to see Fleetwood marry:

The remedy, therefore, in your case must be [...] Marry! Beget yourself a family of children! You are somewhat advanced in life; time must elapse before your children will be at an age to occupy much of your cares; if you feel any vacuity in the interval, call about you your distant relations! Sit down every day at a table with a circle of five or six, constituting your own domestic group. Enquire out of the young men on the threshold of life, who, from the regulations of society, have the best claim upon your assistance. Call them round you; contribute to their means; contribute to their improvement; consult with them as to the most promising adventure in which they can launch themselves on the ocean of life. Depend upon it, you will not then feel a vacuity; your mind will no longer prey upon itself.<sup>114</sup>

Although Godwin has led the reader to understand, as Handwerk and Markley observe, that 'Fleetwood's natural education fails to prepare him for life in society,' he has also been careful to show society's failings.<sup>115</sup> No longer able to rely upon small intellectual gatherings, such as the literary clubs in London, Godwin uses *Fleetwood* to demonstrate how political justice may be worked out of the domestic setting. As with the small societies of *Political Justice*, young men and women need time to grow in intellect, until such a time that they can carry vital messages of truth within society more broadly. Godwin reveals how a person's 'domestic group' is a means of overcoming 'solitude' which 'absolutely considered may instigate to serve ourselves, but not to serve our neighbours' (*PJ*, 397-8). The domestic

---

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, p. 252.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

setting promotes both ‘individual and general advantage’ when contributing to the ‘means and improvement’ of those ‘on the threshold of life, who from the regulations of society, have the best claim upon our assistance,’ society will benefit as will self: as a mind with sense and purpose ‘will no longer prey upon itself.’<sup>116</sup>

Following the advice of Macneil and ‘the regulations of society,’ Fleetwood determines to set aside his own objections to marriage and select a spouse from amongst his friend’s daughters. Having studied the characters and accomplishments of each, Fleetwood recognises a friendship that has formed with the youngest, Mary, who is a ‘gardener and a botanist.’ Somewhat stunned by Fleetwood’s request, Macneil consents, but not before voicing his concerns: ‘I have no objection to your person, your family, your fortune, your understanding, your accomplishments, not even to your age. But then as to your temper—’. Macneil issues a warning and a plea ‘[w]ell then, Fleetwood, I confess, that the woman who marries you, will engage in considerable risk. But, God knows, all marriage is a risk—is the deepest game that can be played in this sublunary scene [...] take the child of my bosom! win her partiality and kindness; my approbation waits on her preference!’<sup>117</sup> Whilst Macneil is an advocate of marriage, he is not afraid to acknowledge its difficulties. His own, unconventional, marriage occurred only after he rescued his wife from a cruel and disastrous first marriage. The scandal of their actions has meant that the Macneils choose to live a life that is shielded from society and the stigma attached to their union. Significantly, Fleetwood and Mary do not rush to marry, and when Macneil resolves to retire in Italy he takes all of his family with him, except for Mary. This allows Fleetwood and Mary time to develop their friendship and to ascertain mutual consent; it also follows another key Godwinian principle: ‘[i]f the unrestrained discussion of abstract enquiry be of the highest importance to

---

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p. 252.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, p. 258.



mankind, the unrestrained investigation of character is scarcely less to be cultivated' (*PJ*, 339). When the tragic news arrives of a shipwreck in which all the Macneils perish, Fleetwood and Mary grow ever closer, their discussions become less restrained and they find reasons to admire one another's character. However, their shared grief causes them to withdraw from the society they keep in London and once married, Fleetwood and Mary return to his remote home in Wales.

At the start of their marriage, Fleetwood can reflect positively on their relationship and notes '[t]he kiss of honest love, how rapturous! But the true ingredients in this rapture are, a heart-felt esteem of each other's character.'<sup>118</sup> Fleetwood's words echo those between Godwin and Wollstonecraft, where passionate love can so easily be inimical to friendship; for passionate love to succeed its basis must be intimate friendship which involves approval of what is truly good and worthy to be desired. However, in this moment of new-found marital bliss, Fleetwood observes:

To me the situation was new, was such as I had not anticipated, and was so much the more enchanting to me. I had lived long in the world, and I had lived alone. My soul panted for a friend, and I had never found such a friend as it demanded [...] I had not been aware that nature has provided a substitute in the marriage-tie, for this romantic, if not impossible friendship.<sup>119</sup>

Although Fleetwood's words are designed to portray new found feelings of contentment and happiness, they have the deeper purpose demonstrating the fragility of his own mind; in seeking to define what is possible and 'impossible,' Fleetwood's words act as a dark foreshadowing of the marriage to come. The reader has been led to

---

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, p. 285.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

observe the intimacy and positive influence of both Ruffigny and Macneil's friendships, but here Fleetwood fails to acknowledge their lasting effect and surprisingly states that he had never found such a friend as his soul demanded. In these early moments of rapture, marriage has 'provided a substitute,' but is also deemed an 'impossible friendship.' Godwin uses the second part of his novel to examine the pressures of cohabitation and, without friends beyond the marital relationship such as Ruffigny, or Macneil, Fleetwood's 'sickly sensibility of temper' returns. On the first morning of their arrival at their home in Merionethshire, Mary selects Fleetwood's beloved boyhood 'closet' as her own and arranges for her drawings and flowers to be brought there. Macneil had voiced his concerns regarding Fleetwood's temper, and the reader is abruptly exposed to the raging of his mind as he battles with thoughts that are both selfish and unselfish in trying to adjust to Mary's choice, her presence and intrusion. Ultimately, he owns, 'the transaction had an unfavourable effect upon my mind.'<sup>120</sup>

Their relationship is put under further pressure when Fleetwood arranges for himself and Mary to spend time alone together reading. Whilst he delights in this shared intellectual activity, he is furious when a servant seeking Mary's assistance interrupts them and is the means of taking her away. Just as Fleetwood kept away from society as a boy, he struggles to allow room for marriage and society. When Mary makes the effort to befriend certain of their neighbours and wishes to attend a neighbourhood dance Fleetwood is incensed. Mary, seeing how much it has upset her husband chooses to stay home, but then Fleetwood peevishly insists that she should go. Mary is put in a position where she cannot win, and although this incident follows that of Fleetwood's reaction to the closet, it marks the beginnings of a

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, p. 295.

husband who is both ‘irrational and dangerous.’<sup>121</sup> Fleetwood struggles to reconcile himself to a relationship that is not one of ownership, but which is legally binding. Mary’s health suffers a dramatic decline as she starts to encounter her husband’s inconstant nature and she senses that she may not have the ability to please him.<sup>122</sup> In remorse for his actions and their effect upon Mary’s health, Fleetwood decides to take her to Bath to recover. Whilst in Bath, Fleetwood acknowledges the influence of his friend Macneil in deciding to invite two young men, his nearest relations, to stay with them. Fleetwood’s intentions are good, and he believes the young company will boost his wife’s spirits and assist her recovery; it seems that he has realised the importance of maintaining friendships within and beyond the marital relationship.

Unfortunately, Fleetwood cannot play the role of strong ‘contributor’ and mentor embodied by Macneil, and when the Iago-type character Gifford, and his honest and benevolent half-brother Kenrick come to stay, it is not long before Gifford devises a plan that involves working on Fleetwood’s fragile emotions. Gifford plots to gain sole inheritance of Fleetwood’s estate and, acting as his confidante convinces Fleetwood of Mary’s infidelity with Kenrick. Manipulated by Gifford, Fleetwood develops a crazed jealousy. Significantly, as Handwerk and Markley note:

In his sensitivity to the woman’s point of view, Godwin was deeply influenced by his own relationship with Mary Wollstonecraft. He had sympathetically detailed the circumstances of her emotional relationships with other men in

---

<sup>121</sup> Quoting Handwerk and Markley, *Fleetwood*, p. 28, who also note how closely this incident in *Fleetwood* resembles Elizabeth Inchbald’s *A Simple Story* and the scene where Miss Milner attends a masquerade ball against Lord Elmwood’s will. See Elizabeth Inchbald, *A Simple Story*, ed. by J. M. S. Tompkins (1791) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 148-73.

<sup>122</sup> Handwerk and Markley note: ‘Godwin’s portrayal of the effects of a husband’s bad behaviour on his wife places it among important early texts that worked towards exposing the injustice that women suffered in contemporary Britain.’ *Fleetwood*, p. 31.

his account of her life in the *Memoirs*. Wollstonecraft's own *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* had sharply critiqued the institution of marriage as practised in contemporary Britain for the insidious effects it had upon women's characters and intellects. In 1797, and with Godwin's strong support, she began work on a novel that would illustrate many of these beliefs in a fictional setting. Although she failed to complete the novel prior to her death, *The Wrongs of Woman: Or, Maria* amply catalogues the mistreatment its title character suffers as the wife of an abusive husband. Harassed by a husband who wishes to control her inheritance, Maria suffers the same injustice at the hands of the legal system as Fleetwood's wife, Mary, does in Godwin's novel. Fleetwood's abuse of his status and power to legally prove his wife's alleged adultery and to arrange to divorce and disinherit his child falls scarcely short of the efforts of Maria's husband to have her imprisoned, which lead Wollstonecraft's heroine to contemplate suicide.<sup>123</sup>

There is a notable difference between Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's novels; he is careful to make the marriage of Mary Fleetwood a marriage of equal choice, unlike the judge in *The Wrongs of Woman* who asks '[w]hat virtuous woman thought of her feelings?— It was her duty to love and obey the man chosen by her parents and relations, who were qualified by their experience to judge better for her, than she could for herself.'<sup>124</sup> Mary Fleetwood has judged for herself and the love that developed between herself and Fleetwood was 'fostered by delicacy' (as Wollstonecraft had herself argued it should be).<sup>125</sup> Indeed, as the novel continues Mary Fleetwood displays many of the

---

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. Godwin oversaw the publication of Wollstonecraft's unfinished novel. See *Mary and the Wrongs of Woman* (1788; 1798), ed. by Gary Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 65-6.

<sup>124</sup> *The Wrongs of Woman*, p. 174.

<sup>125</sup> 'Love, in which the imagination mingles its bewitching colouring, must be fostered by delicacy.' Preface to *The Wrongs of Woman*, p. 67.

attributes that Godwin admired in Wollstonecraft. She is determined, self-reliant and is consistent, and knowing that Gifford's cruel mind-games have perverted her husband, when Fleetwood deserts her and flees to Europe, she resolves to find him.

It is with the support of their true friends that Mary is able to find Fleetwood, so that again, the reader is able to see Fleetwood's failure to fully understand the meaning of friendship. When at last Fleetwood is found, Mary (who is dressed in a dark dress and veil) quietly enters his room. Mary has been made aware of a macabre scene in which Fleetwood dressed life-size waxed dolls as the bride Mary and her groom Kenrick.<sup>126</sup> Waiting until his own and Mary's anniversary, Fleetwood then had a banquet sent to his room and in sheer madness, performed an enactment of the waxwork's wedding. Fleetwood's mind is so affected as to believe that the waxwork of Mary moves, just as he is making a speech: '[b]ut, while I was still speaking, I saw her move—if I live, I saw it. She turned her eyes this way and that; she grinned and chattered too.'<sup>127</sup> In a complete frenzy of emotion, Fleetwood hacks the waxworks to pieces. Despite her knowledge of this crazed behaviour, Mary reveals herself to Fleetwood and instructs him to take her hand and her heart. Falling into his arms, she states 'you shall not make your next wedding supper like the last!'<sup>128</sup> Here, she emerges as an equal partner. Her resolve now enables her to make their marriage more truly based on 'the intercourse of the mind,' one that is based upon essential equality and choice. Mary Fleetwood is restored, and literally emerges for Casimir Fleetwood from behind a veil: '[s]he threw back her veil [...] Mary never looked half so beautiful, half so radiant, as now.'<sup>129</sup> When the

---

<sup>126</sup> For an informative reading of historical context see, Emma Peacocke, 'Puppets, Waxworks and a Wooden Dramatis Personae: Eighteenth-Century Material Culture and Philosophical History in Godwin's *Fleetwood*,' *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 31.1 (2018), 189-212.

<sup>127</sup> *Fleetwood*, p. 387.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, p. 422.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*.

Fleetwoods are reacquainted it is as it once was for Godwin and Wollstonecraft: '[w]hen we met again, we met with new pleasure [...] It was friendship melting into love [...] Sentiment is nothing, till you have arrived at a mystery and a veil, something that is seen obscurely, that is just hinted at in the distance, that has neither certain outline nor colour, but that is left for the mind to fill up according to its pleasure and in the best manner it is able.'<sup>130</sup> Fleetwood has finally encountered a healthy and worthy 'passion of the mind' that is directed by intellectual friendship (*PPW* VI, 187).

---

<sup>130</sup> Godwin, *Memoirs*, pp. 158-9 and 'Of Love and Friendship,' *PPW* VI, 187.

## Conclusion

Godwin's early interest in friendship was formed at dissenting academies where free enquiry, 'textual culture' and rational dissenting networks all helped to inspire the composition of his early manuscript 'Notes on Friendship'.<sup>1</sup> Godwin uses his manuscript to establish the importance of friendship and the classically inspired principle that 'society depends upon friendship'.<sup>2</sup> Early on, Godwin recognises the usefulness of a friend and the happiness to be found in both seeking to serve, or receiving help from a friend. He notes how qualities such as 'good judgement and sense' are of estimable worth and inspire trust and help to establish essential quality in friendship. Significantly, he recognises affection in friendship: 'it alleviates our griefs to fly to one whom we confide in and love, disclose our secret soul and unburden our bursting heart.'<sup>3</sup>

Godwin had gained the friendship of his academy tutor Kippis, and his academy peer Marshall, but his introduction to wider rational dissenting networks inspired Godwin further. Such networks included publishers Robinson and Johnson and the modes of sociability practised by such men: the dinner parties they hosted and the friendships to be gained by visiting their shops, gave Godwin the practical experience necessary to further inform his work. His introduction to Holcroft, and to others such as Nicholson helped Godwin to more fully realise his own beliefs.

Godwin and Holcroft enjoyed close friendship and friendship in a 'small circle', but they also moved in different circles, and each could claim a sizeable acquaintance. A wider acquaintance was central to the dissemination of their key tenets of perfectibility, sociability,

---

<sup>1</sup> Whitehouse, *Textual Culture*, p. 5; 'Notes on Friendship,' MS Abinger, c. 36, fols. 40-4.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1295b23-5, quoted in, A. C. Grayling, *Friendship*, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

and the happiness of mankind; the preservation of an intimate circle was also of vital importance to the development of their social and political arguments and to the literary form in which those arguments were expressed. Both men held the view that politics was a necessary component to have at the heart of friendship, as it triggered inner, progressive, political improvement; such individual advancement would eventually cross into a practical type of politics, which would seek betterment and necessary change, resulting in a society focused on perpetual improvement. The best means of pursuing political truths was through intimate friendship or the close camaraderie of a small circle.

Dissenting influence is evidenced in the modes of sociability embraced by Godwin and Holcroft, and in *Political Justice* (1793) where Godwin argues that the ‘best interests of mankind eminently depends upon the freedom of social communication’ (*PJ*, 118). The discourse enjoyed at their own dinner parties and those of Robinson, and Johnson, and at booksellers’ shops, and tea parties demonstrates that Godwin was gaining the practical experience necessary to inform his theoretical work. Together with Holcroft, Godwin sought to radicalise sociability further by pursuing frank and honest discourse, thereby outlining the advantages of ‘the freedom of social communication’ (*PJ*, 118). Godwin therefore uses *Political Justice* to illustrate theory meeting practice.<sup>4</sup>

The influence of Holcroft combined with shared circles of sociability was significant. Holcroft’s interest in enlightening the lower orders was great. Inspired by his own background, and self-learning his influence is evident in the gradual introduction of small gatherings of Godwin’s model, when Godwin writes:

---

<sup>4</sup> See *PJ*, 98.



Discussion perhaps never exists with so much vigour and utility as in the conversation of two persons. It may be carried on with advantage in small and friendly societies. Does the fewness of their numbers imply the rarity of their existence? Far otherwise: the time perhaps will come when such institutions will be universal (*PJ*, 119).

*Political Justice* was written for the greater good, and at later moments of political threat and intensity, Holcroft would further encourage Godwin to write for the shared cause. As St Clair notes, ‘It was Holcroft who convinced [Godwin] that the novel was the best instrument for influencing opinion.’<sup>5</sup> Godwin embeds his model of sociability into his political novel *Caleb Williams* (1794) to demonstrate how his system of read, reflect, converse as set out in *Political Justice* could be effective even when circles of friendship found spies and informers in their midst, and ‘terror ha[d] become the order of the day’ (*CW*, 312). Godwin uses the want of friendship throughout *Caleb Williams* to highlight its value.

When Holcroft was arrested on a charge of High Treason, he used their friendship, and his letter, to spur Godwin to reach for that ‘nobler purpose’—namely composing a reformist work for the ‘general good’ (*GLI*, 107). *Cursory Strictures* (1794) was a breakthrough for Godwin and his circle in terms of style and literary effects, for the first time it effectively transferred the language of radical friendship beyond the circle to a wider public. Written the same year as *Caleb Williams*, *Cursory Strictures* is further evidence of Godwin’s ‘early recognition of the value of feeling,’ and of friendship.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, pp. 116-17.

<sup>6</sup> Quoting Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 67, see Chapter Three.

By the time Godwin came to write his novel *Fleetwood* (1805), he had revised *Political Justice* (1793, 1796, 1798): he would later record that his original *Political Justice* had been blemished by his ‘inattention to the principle, that feeling, not judgment, is the source of human actions.’ He would also acknowledge that the first edition of *Political Justice* had been flawed because of ‘the unqualified condemnation of the private affections.’<sup>7</sup> The first edition more starkly and more emphatically argues that only the perception of truth is needed to motivate our adherence to moral principles. However, this thesis has examined how each edition of *Political Justice* holds to the principle that intellectual friendship, and the affection felt in such friendship, is the basis of any worthy relationship, and this is a tenet that remains unchanged throughout. Feeling, particularly the kind of feeling that forms an essential part of intimate friendship, it is apparent, is necessary to develop moral reasoning. Notably, Holcroft had also urged his friend to revise his treatise, using a review of *Political Justice* to observe inconsistencies between what he knew of the author’s beliefs and the flaws in the presentation of such beliefs.

In *Fleetwood*, Godwin is able to write more fully from experience. Fleetwood reflects:

Friendship, in the sense in which I felt the want of it, has been truly said to be a sentiment that can grasp but one individual in its embrace. The person who entertains this sentiment must see in his friend a creature of a species by itself, must respect and be attached to him above all the world, and be deeply convinced that the loss of him would be a calamity which nothing earthly could repair. By long habit, he must have made his friend a part of himself; must be incapable of any pleasure in public, in reading, in travelling, of which he does not make his friend, at

---

<sup>7</sup> William Godwin, ‘The Principal Revolutions of Opinion’ (1800) quoted by Philp in *PJ*, xxvi.

least in idea, a partaker, or of passing a day or an hour in the conceptions of which the thought of his friend does not mingle itself.<sup>8</sup>

It is difficult to read the above passage without recollecting the letters — referred to in this thesis — of Holcroft to Godwin and how they demonstrate ‘by long habit’ how much ‘a part of himself’ each has become to the other. Holcroft demonstrates in his letters to Godwin regarding revising *Political Justice* and concerning Godwin and Wollstonecraft, how he takes ‘pleasure in public, in reading, in travelling,’ and there is not the ‘passing of a day or an hour’ in ‘which he does not make his friend, at least in idea, a partaker, in the conceptions of which the thought of his friend does not mingle itself.’<sup>9</sup> As Holcroft travels he is keen to share his own news with his closest friend and to remind him of how he is everywhere in his thoughts. Godwin has the assurance of intimate friendship as described in the passage, in *Fleetwood*, above: he remains rooted in a time of profound affect, when the friendships forged at dinner parties, such as those hosted by George Robinson, became as intimate as the description given by Fleetwood above and led to the discussion of all things great and small: and the fruition of *Political Justice*.

Godwin is also able to consider marriage and co-habitation and write affection more fully into *Fleetwood* due to the lasting effect of Wollstonecraft. Mary Fleetwood displays many of the attributes that Godwin admired in Wollstonecraft. She is determined, self-reliant and is consistent. As Louise Joy has noted concerning Godwin’s *Memoirs*:

The affections are figured as the enduring gift that  
Wollstonecraft bequeaths to her husband. Her exceptional

---

<sup>8</sup> *Fleetwood*, p. 230.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

capacity for affection is invoked throughout the *Memoirs*, deployed as a symbol that testifies to her objective moral worth. Through this pivotal work, the affections are transformed [...] to an emblem of the capacity to fulfil the demands of justice so extolled in his political philosophy.<sup>10</sup>

Godwin came to realise the true worth of Wollstonecraft's 'culture of the heart,' but was characteristically 'careful' to cultivate, what he would later define as 'passion of the mind' in order that passion met with reason.<sup>11</sup> In the second and third editions of *Political Justice* Godwin writes that 'passion is so far from being incompatible with reason, that it is inseparable from it. Virtue, sincerity, justice, and all those principles which are begotten and cherished in us by a due exercise of reason, will never be very strenuously espoused, till they are ardently loved; that is, till their value is clearly perceived and adequately understood. In this sense nothing is necessary, but to show us that a thing is truly good and worthy to be desired, in order to excite in us a passion for its attainment' (*PPW IV*, 39-40). Godwin continued to wrestle with the idea that marriage is a bond for life and was keen to emphasise that it must be a matter of choice: with choice comes affection and the recognition of true worth. Friendship remains the purest affection and is the basis of any worthy relationship. He uses his novel *Fleetwood* to continue the workings of 'Notes on Friendship,' *Political Justice*, and the *Memoirs*, to demonstrate a healthy and worthy 'passion of the mind' that is directed by intellectual friendship (*PPW VI*, 187).

Godwin's later essay 'Of Love and Friendship' (1831) is a work of two parts, and the first part may again be seen as testament to the

---

<sup>10</sup> Louise Joy, 'St Leon and the Culture of the Heart,' *History of European Ideas*, 33 (2007), 40-53.

<sup>11</sup> Concerning Wollstonecraft's 'culture of the heart,' see Clemmit and Walker, Introduction in *Memoirs*, p. 31; also, Godwin, *Memoirs*, pp. 204-6; *PPW VI*, 187.

enduring effect of Wollstonecraft. Godwin writes affectionately of the bond between parent and child, so that the domestic affections evident in Wollstonecraft, written so tenderly into the *Memoirs*, are more fully realised by himself.

The second part 'Of Love and Friendship' focuses on classical friendship, including the friendship between Achilles and Patroclus, and Scipio and Laelius. The essential equality of such friendships is reflected in 'Notes on Friendship' and is written more fully into *Political Justice* where Godwin has the assurance of experience. Godwin therefore concludes as he begins, that society depends on friendship: of equal importance is love in friendship.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Primary Sources

Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, transl. by Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin, 1991)

Baxter, Richard, *A Call to the Unconverted, to Turn and Live: and Accept of Mercy, While Mercy May be Had; as Ever They Will Find Mercy in the Day of Their Extremity, From the Living God* (London: Printed by R. W. for Nevil Simmons, 1658), and (London: Printed for Thomas Field, 1761)

Belsham, Thomas, *Memoirs of the late Reverend Thomas Belsham including a brief Notice of his published Works and copious Extracts from his Diary, together with letters to and from his Friends and Correspondents*, ed. by J. Williams (published by editor, 1835)

Burke, Edmund, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. by Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Burke, Edmund, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. by L. G. Mitchell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Cicero, *Defence Speeches*, transl. by D. H. Berry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Cicero, *De Inventione*, transl. by H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library: Harvard University Press, 1949)

Cicero, M. Tullius, *Laelius: A Dialogue on Friendship*, transl. by Henry Clark Johnson and Evelyn S. Shuckburgh (New York: London: Macmillan and Co., 1894)

Cicero, *Letters of Marcus Tullius Cicero: with his treatises on friendship and old age*, transl. by Evelyn S. Shuckburgh (New York: P. F. Collier, 1909 [repr. New York, Another Leaf Press LLC, 2012])

Cicero, *Political Speeches*, transl. by D. H. Berry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Eyre, Sir James, *The Charge Delivered by The Right Honourable Sir James Eyre, Lord Chief Justice of His Majesty's Common Plea And One of the Commissioners Named in a Special Commission of Oyer and Terminer, issued under the Great Seal of Great Britain, To Enquire of Certain High Treasons, and Misprisions of Treason, Within the County of Middlesex, To the Grand Jury, At the Session House on Clerkenwell Green, on Thursday the 2d Day of October, 1794* (London: Daniel Isaac Eaton, 1794), in *Political and Philosophical Writings of William*

Godwin, edited by Mark Philp, 7 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1993), vol. II

Fielding, Sir John, *A Brief Description of the Cities of London and Westminster: The Public Buildings, Palaces, Gardens, Squares, &c. with an Alphabetical List of all the Streets within the Bills of Mortality* (London: J. Wilkie, 1776)

Fox, William, *The Political Writings of William Fox: Abolitionist, Tory, and Friend of the French Revolution*, ed. by John Barrell and Timothy Whelan (Nottingham: Trent Editions, 2011)

Godwin, William, *An Account of the Seminary That will be Opened on Monday the Fourth Day of August, at Epsom in Surrey, For the Instruction of Twelve Pupils in the Greek, Latin, French, and English Languages* (London: T. Cadell, 1783)

Godwin, William, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), ed. by Mark Philp, 1<sup>st</sup> edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Godwin, William, *Caleb Williams* (1794), ed. by David McCracken (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Godwin, William, *Caleb Williams* (1794), ed. by Gary Handwerk and A. A. Markley (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2000)

Godwin, William, *Caleb Williams* (1794), ed. by Pamela Clemit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Godwin, William, *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, ed. by Mark Philp, 8 vols (London: William Pickering, 1993)

Godwin, William, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Modern Morals and Happiness* (1798), ed. by Isaac Kramnick, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985)

Godwin, *Considerations on Lord Grenville's and Mr Pitt's Bills, Concerning Treasonable and Seditious Practices, and Unlawful Assemblies*, William Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, vol 2

Godwin, William, *Fleetwood: or, The New Man of Feeling* (1805), ed. by Gary Handwerk and A. A. Markley (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2000)

Godwin, William, *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London: J. Johnson, 1798)

Godwin, William, *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798), ed. by Pamela Clemit and Gina Luria Walker (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001)

Godwin, William, 'Essay X: Of Cohabitation' in, *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners and Literature, in a Series of Essays* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1797)

- Godwin, William, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, edited by Mark Philp, 7 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1993)
- Godwin, William, *The Letters of William Godwin*, ed. by Pamela Clemit, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 2014)
- Godwin, William, *The Anarchist Writings of William Godwin*, ed. by Peter Marshall, (London: Freedom Press, 1996)
- William Godwin, *The Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, 8 vols. (London: Routledge, 1992)
- Godwin, William, *The Plays of William Godwin*, ed. by David O'Shaughnessy (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2010)
- Godwin, William, *William Godwin's Diary*, ed. by Victoria Myers, David O'Shaughnessy, and Mark Philp, in  
<<http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/index2.html>>
- Hays, Mary, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), ed. by Eleanor Ty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
- Hays, Mary, *The Correspondence (1779-1843) of Mary Hays, British Novelist*, ed. by Marilyn L. Brooks (Ceredigion: The Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd., 2004)
- Hazlitt, William, *The Fight and Other Writings*, ed. by Tom Paulin and David Chandler (London: Penguin, 2000)
- Holcroft, Thomas, *The Life of Thomas Holcroft: Written by himself continued to the time of his death from his diary notes and other papers by William Hazlitt and now newly edited with Introduction and Notes by Elbridge Colby In Two Volumes* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1925)
- Thomas Holcroft, 'Mr Godwin's Enquiry Concerning Political Justice' in, *The Monthly Review* XI (1793), 187-196
- Holcroft, Thomas, *The Novels and Selected Plays of Thomas Holcroft*, 5 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007)
- *The History of Manthorn, the Enthusiast* (1778-9), ed. by Rick Incorvati in, *Early Novels, The Novels and Selected Plays of Thomas Holcroft*, vol. I
- *The Adventures of Hugh Trevor* (1794-7) in *The Novels and Selected Plays of Thomas Holcroft*, ed. by W. M. Verhoeven, vol. 3
- Horne Tooke, John, ed. by A. V. Beedell and A. D. Harvey, *Horne Tooke's Prison Diary* (Leeds: The Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society Ltd., 1995)
- Inchbald, Elizabeth, *A Simple Story* (1791), ed. by J.M.S. Tompkins and Jane Spencer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)



Inchbald, Elizabeth, 'Elizabeth Inchbald to William Godwin: seeking William Godwin and Thomas Holcroft's opinion', in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger c. 3

Kippis, Andrew, *Biographia Britannica, or, The Lives of the Most Eminent Persons who have Flourished in Great Britain and Ireland*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. vol. 5 (London: John Nichols and others, 1793)

Kippis, Andrew, 'Preface' in, Philip Doddridge, *A Course of Lectures on the Principal Subjects in Pneumatology, Ethics, and Divinity with References to the Most Considerable Authors on Each Subject: To Which, Are Now Added, A Great Number of References, and Many Notes of Reference, to the Various Writers, on the Same Topics, Who Have Altered Since the Doctor's Decease*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (London: S. Crowder and others, 1794)

Nicholson, William Jnr., *The Life of William Nicholson 1753-1815*, ed. by Sue Durrell afterword by Frank A.J.L. James (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 2017)

Paine, Thomas, *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings*, ed. by Mark Philp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Priestley, Joseph, *Letter to the Right Hon. William Pitt...on the Subjects of Toleration and Church Establishments, occasioned by his Speech against the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts on Wednesday, the 28<sup>th</sup> March 1787* (London: J. Johnson, 1787)

Shakespeare, William, *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 2008)

Thelwall, John, *The Politics of English Jacobinism: Writings of John Thelwall*, ed. by Gregory Claeys (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995)

Thumb, Judge, *Answer to Cursory Strictures On a Charge Delivered to the Grand Jury, October 2, 1794. By Lord Chief Justice Eyre, Said to be written by Judge Thumb. In the Ministerial Paper called the TIMES, October 25, 1794.* (London: D. I. Eaton, 1794) in, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, vol. II

William West, *Fifty Years Recollections of an Old Bookseller* (London: Printed by and for the Author, 1837)

Wollstonecraft, Mary, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and *of the Rights of Men* (1790), ed. by Janet Todd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Wollstonecraft, Mary, *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), ed. by Tone Brekke and Jon Mee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Wollstonecraft, Mary, *Mary* (1788) and *The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), ed. by Gary Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Wollstonecraft, Mary, *Mary Wollstonecraft: The Collected Letters*, ed. by Janet Todd (London: Penguin, 2004)

## Manuscripts

### *British Library.*

MS Western Collection 96 RLF/1/230/4: Dibdin, Thomas, 'Application to the Literary Committee.' Relief fund application on behalf of the Holcroft family following the death of Thomas Holcroft (1809).

MS Western Collection 20081: Godwin, William, '10 June —', 'ORIGINAL, letters of literary men, actors, etc., addressed principally to Frederic Reynolds, the play-writer, and various members of his family.'

### *Bodleian Library.*

Godwin, William, and Thomas Holcroft in Abinger Collection, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford,

<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/1500-1900/abinger/abinger.html>>

Godwin, William, 'Autobiographical note concerning the personal influence of Joseph Fawcett, Thomas Holcroft, George Dyson and Samuel Taylor Coleridge', Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger c. 32, fol. 34

Godwin, William, 'An Analysis of Godwin's Own Character marked by Godwin', Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger c. 32, fols. 37-40

Godwin, William, 'List of people [of the Godwin circle] who ought to see one another frequently, & from w[hi]ch might be formed a Select Club', Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger c. 32, fols. 76-7

Godwin, William, 'Notes on Friendship', Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger c. 36, fols. 40-4

Godwin, William, 'Of Religion', Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger c. 86, fols. 40-9

Godwin, William, 'On a debate on the question "What moves any man to do a generous action?"' Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger c. 29, fols. 36-7

Godwin, William, 'On Human Nature' Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger c. 36, fols. 5

Godwin, William, 'to — and Thomas Holcroft' Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger, c. 2, fols. 48-49v

Godwin, William, 'William Godwin's notes about and instructions to his pupil Thomas Cooper (1789-91)', Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger c. 32, fols. 81-2

Holcroft, Thomas, 'Thomas Holcroft to William Godwin: concerning a visit to Norfolk and Godwin's mother', in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger, c.3,

fols. 70-71v, <<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/1500-1900/abinger/images/Dep.c.511-23-1.jpg>>

Holcroft, Thomas, 'Thomas Holcroft to William Godwin: concerning Holcroft's fall from a ladder', Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger, c. 2, fols. 101-2, <<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/1500-1900/abinger/images/Dep.c.511-221.jpg>>

## Secondary Sources

Abrams, M. H. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: London: W. W. Norton and Co., 1971)

Allen, B. Sprague, 'The Reaction against William Godwin', *Modern Philology* 16. 5 (1918), 225-243, <<http://0.www.jstor.org.library/stable/432978>>

Allen, B. Sprague, 'William Godwin as a Sentimentalist', *PMLA*, 33. 1 (1918), 1-29, <<http://0.www.jstor.org.library/stable/456970>>

Allen, B. Sprague, 'William Godwin's Influence upon John Thelwall', *PMLA*, 37. 4 (1922), 662-682, <<http://0.www.jstor.org.library.edgehill.ac.uk/stable/457165>>

Andrews, Stuart, *Unitarian Radicalism: Political Rhetoric, 1770-1814* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003)

Arnold, Catharine, *Underworld London: Crime and Punishment in the Capital City* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2012)

Babb, Howard S., and Jerrold E. Hogle, 'The Texture of the Self in Godwin's Things as They Are', *boundary 2, Revisions of the Anglo-American Tradition: Part 1*, 7. 2 (1979), 261-282, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/303085>>

Barrell, John, *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

Beaumont, Matthew, *Nightwalking: A Nocturnal History of London* (London: New York: Verso, 2015)

Bentley, Jr., G. E., 'Copyright Documents in the George Robinson Archive: William Godwin and Others 1713-1820,' *Studies in Bibliography*, 35 (1982), 67-110

Bewley, Christina, and David Bewley, *Gentleman Radical: A Life of John Horne Tooke 1736-1812* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998)

Boaden, James, ed., *Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald; Including Her Familiar Correspondence with the Most Distinguished Persons of Her Time to Which Are Added The Massacre, and A Case of Conscience; Now First Published from her Autograph Copies, in Two Volumes* (London: Richard Bentley, 1833)

- Brailsford, H. N. *Shelley, Godwin, and Their Circle: The French Revolution Reflected in English Literature*
- Braithwaite, Helen, *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent: Joseph Johnson and the Cause of Liberty* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002)
- Brewer, John, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: New York: Routledge, 1997 [repr. 2013])
- Brewer, William D., *The Mental Anatomies of William Godwin and Mary Shelley* (London: Associated University Presses, 2001)
- Broadie, Alexander, *The Scottish Enlightenment: The Historical Age of the Historical Nation* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2011)
- Bugg, John, *Five Long Winters: The Trials of British Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014)
- Burwick, Frederick, 'The Language of High Treason: Thomas Hardy, John Horne Tooke, and the Edinburgh Seven', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 63. 3 (2000), 263-275, <<http://0.www.jstor.org.library/stable/3817744>>
- Butler, Marilyn, ed., *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)
- Butler, Marilyn, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)
- Butler, Marilyn, *Romantics Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background, 1760-1830*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981 [repr. 1992])
- Carlson, Julie, A. *England's First Family of Writers: Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Mary Shelley* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007)
- Carlson, Julie. A. *In the Theatre of Romanticism: Coleridge, Nationalism, Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)
- Clemit, Pamela, 'On William Godwin and the 'Leisure of a Cultivated Understanding' in, *The Idler*, March (2015)
- Clemit, Pamela, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to British Literature of the French Revolution in the 1790s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)
- Clemit, Pamela, *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)
- Cone, Carl. B., *The English Jacobins: Reformers in Late 18<sup>th</sup> Century England* (1968) (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2010)
- Corton, Christine L. *London Fog: The Biography* (Cambridge, MA: London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015)
- Cox, Philip, *Reading Adaptations: Novels and Verse Narratives on the Stage, 1790-1840* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000)

- DeLucia, Jo Ellen, 'Radcliffe, George Robinson and Eighteenth-Century Print Culture: Beyond the Circulating Library' in, *Women's Writing*, 2. 3 (2015), 287-299
- Dickinson, H. T., *British Radicalism and the French Revolution 1789-1815* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1985)
- Doyle, William, *The French Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)
- Doyle, William, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)
- Eley, Geoff, 'Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century,' in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992)
- Ellis, Markman, *The Coffee House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004)
- Emsley, Clive, *British Society and the French Wars 1793-1815* (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1979)
- Epstein, James, and David, Karr, 'Playing at Revolution: British "Jacobin" Performance', *The Journal of Modern History*, 79. 3 (2007), 495-530, <<http://0.www.jstor.org.library/stable/10.1086/517980>>
- Fairclough, Mary, *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy and Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)
- Favret, Mary, A., *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics and the Fiction of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)
- Fulford, Tim, *Romantic Poetry and Literary Coteries: The Dialect of the Tribe* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)
- Gatrell, Vic, *The First Bohemians: Life and Art in London's Golden Age* (London: Penguin, 2013)
- Grayling, A. C. *Friendship* (New Haven, CT: and London: Yale University Press, 2013)
- Habermas, Jürgen, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989 [repr. 2016])
- Handwerk, Gary, 'Mapping Misogyny: Godwin's Fleetwood and the Staging of Rousseauvian Education', *Studies in Romanticism*, 41. 3 (2002)
- Hay, Daisy, *Young Romantics: The Shelleys, Byron and Other Tangled Lives* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010)
- Higonnet, Patrice, *Goodness beyond Virtue: Jacobins during the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998)

- James, Felicity, *Charles Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth: Reading Friendship in the 1790s* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)
- James, Felicity, and Ian Inkster, eds. *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld Circle 1740-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)
- James, Felicity, ‘Chapter 1: ‘Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld Circle, 1740-1860: An Introduction’ in, *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld Circle 1740-1860*
- Wykes, David L., ‘Chapter 2: The Revd John Aikin Senior: Kibworth School and Warrington Academy’ in, *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld Circle 1740-1860*
- Jenkins, Annibel, *I’ll Tell You What: The Life of Elizabeth Inchbald* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2003)
- Joy, Louise, ‘*St Leon* and the Culture of the Heart’, *History of European Ideas*, 33 (2007), 40-53
- Karr, David, ‘“Thoughts That Flash Like Lightning”: Thomas Holcroft, Radical Theater, and the Production of Meaning in 1790s London’, *Journal of British Studies*, 40. 3 (2001), 324-356, in <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3070727>>
- Kegan Paul, Charles, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries* (1876) 2 vols. (London: Henry S. King and Co., 1876)
- Kelly, Gary, *The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976)
- Kelly, Gary, ‘Holcroft, Thomas’ (1745-1809), *ODNB*, 1-10, in <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/13487>>
- Klancher, Jon, *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences: Knowledge and Cultural Institutions in the Romantic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)
- Lamb, Robert, ‘Was William Godwin a Utilitarian?’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 70. 1 (2009), 119-141, <<http://0.www.jstor.org.library/stable/40208093>>
- Lee, Anthony W. ed. *Mentoring in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2010)
- Linton, Marisa, *Choosing Terror: Virtue, Friendship and Authenticity in the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)
- Littlewood, Samuel Robinson, *Elizabeth Inchbald and Her Circle: The Life Story of a Charming Woman (1753-1821)* (London: Daniel O’Connor, 1921)
- Locke, Don, *A Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980)
- McCalman, Iain, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)



- McCracken, David, 'Godwin's Literary Theory: The Alliance between Fiction and Political Philosophy', *Philological Quarterly*, 49. 1 (1970), 113-133, <<http://0pao.chadwyck.co.uk.library.edgehill.ac.uk/articles/results.do?QueryType=articles&ResultsID=13D3A11C0A587EE22&filterSequence=0&itemNumber=2&journalID=1180>> [accessed 4 April 2013]
- MacMillan, Hector, *Handful of Rogues: Thomas Muir's Enemies of the People* (Argyll: Argyll Publishing, 2005)
- Maniquis, Robert, and Victoria Myers, eds. *Godwinian Moments: From the Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011)
- Marshall, Peter H., *William Godwin* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984)
- Mee, Jon, *Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention, and Community 1762-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)
- Mee, Jon, *Print, Publicity and Radicalism in the 1790s: The Laurel of Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)
- Mitchell, L. G. *Charles James Fox* (London: Penguin, 1992)
- Mitchell, Leslie, *The Whig World 1760-1837* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2005)
- Morris, Marilyn, *Sex, Money and Personal Character in Eighteenth-Century British Politics* (New Haven, CT: London: Yale University Press, 2014)
- Myers, Mitzi, 'Godwin's Changing Conception of Caleb Williams', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 12. 4 (1972), 591-628, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/449955>>
- Victoria Myers, 'William Godwin and the Ars Rhetorica', *Studies in Romanticism*, 41. 3 (2002), 415 - 444
- O'Brien, Eliza, "'The Greatest Appearance of Truth': Telling Tales with Thomas Holcroft", *Eighteenth Century Fiction*, 28. 3 (2016), 501-26
- O'Brien, Pdraig, O. *Warrington Academy 1757-86: Its Predecessors and Successors* (Lancashire: Owl Books, 1989)
- O'Shaughnessy, David, 'Caleb Williams and the Philomaths: Recalibrating Political Justice for the Nineteenth Century' in, *Nineteenth Century Literature*, 66. 4 (2012), 423-448
- O'Shaughnessy, David, *William Godwin and the Theatre* (London: New York: Routledge, 2010)
- Peacocke, Emma, 'Puppets, Waxworks and a Wooden Dramatis Personae: Eighteenth-Century Material Culture and Philosophical History in Godwin's *Fleetwood*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 31. 1 (2018), 189-212
- Philp, Mark, 'Godwin, William' (1756-1836), in *ODNB*, 1-12, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/10898>>

- Philp, Mark, *Godwin's Political Justice* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 1986)
- Porter, Roy, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Penguin, 1982 [repr. 1990])
- Priestman, Martin, *Romantic Atheism: Poetry and Freethought 1780-1830*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)
- Redford, Bruce, *The Converse of the Pen: Acts of Intimacy in the Eighteenth Century Familiar Letter* (Chicago, IL: and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986)
- Roberts, Maurice, 'Richard Baxter and His Gospel', *Banner of Truth Magazine*, 339, (1991) in, <<https://www.puritansermons.com/baxter/baxter19.htm>>
- Rodden, John, 'Godwin's *Caleb Williams*: "A Half-Told and Mangled Tale"', *College Literature*, 36. 4 (2009), 119-145, <<http://www.0-ehis.ebscohost.com.library.edgehill.ac.uk/eds/pdfviewer?vid=4&hid=124&sid=83995192-e3b3-457a-b7ae-8bdabc9342bd%40sessionmgr111>>
- Russell, Gillian, and Clara Tuite, eds., *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- Epstein, James, 'Chapter 3: "Equality and No King": Sociability and Sedition: The Case of John Frost'
- Russell, Gillian, 'Chapter 7: Spouters or washerwomen: The Sociability of Romantic Lecturing'
- Ruston, Sharon, *Romanticism* (London: Continuum, 2007)
- Ryan, Robert M. *The Romantic Reformation: Religious Politics in English Literature 1789-1824* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)
- Seed, John, 'Gentleman Dissenters: The Social and Political Meanings of Rational Dissent in the 1770s and 1780s', *Historical Journal*, 28 (1985), 316-20
- Spacks, Patricia Meyer, *Novel Beginnings: Experiments in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006)
- St. Clair, William, *The Godwins and the Shelleys: The Biography of a Family* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989)
- St Clair, William, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)
- Stone, Lawrence, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin, 1977 [repr. 1979])
- Swindells, Julia and David Francis Taylor eds. *The Oxford Handbook of The Georgian Theatre 1737-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)
- Betsy Bolton, 'Chapter Two: Theorising Audience and Spectatorial Agency'



- Tadmor, Naomi, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)
- Taussig, Gurion, *Coleridge and the Idea of Friendship, 1789-1804* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002)
- Taylor, David Francis, *Theatres of Opposition: Empire, Revolution, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)
- Thale, Mary, 'London Debating Societies in the 1790s', *The Historical Journal*, 32. 1 (1989), 57-86, <<http://0.www.jstor.org.library/stable/2639817>>
- Thale, Mary, ed. *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society: 1792-1799* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983 [repr. 2008])
- Thompson, E. P., 'Hunting the Jacobin Fox', *Past and Present*, 142 (1994), 94-140
- Thompson, E. P., *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1963 [repr. 2013])
- Todd, Janet, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1986)
- Tompkins, J. M. S., *The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1932)
- Vickery, Amanda, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, CT: and London: Yale University Press, 1998)
- Waters, Mary A. *British Women Writers and the Profession of Criticism, 1789-1832* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)
- Watt, Ian, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) (London: Pimlico, 2000)
- Wallace, Miriam, 'Constructing Treason, Narrating Truth: The 1794 Treason Trial of Thomas Holcroft and the Fate of English Jacobinism', in *érudit: Promouvoir et diffuser la recherche et la création*, 45 (2007) 1-16, *Romanticism on the Net* <<http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/2007/v/n45/015823ar.html>>
- Wallace, Miriam L., and A. A. Markley, eds., *Reviewing Thomas Holcroft, 1745-1809: Essays on His Works and Life* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012)
- Wallace, Miriam L., *Revolutionary Subjects in the English "Jacobin" Novel, 1790-1805* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2009)
- Wharam, Alan, *The Treason Trials, 1794* (Leicester and London: Leicester University Press, 1992)
- Whitehouse, Tessa, *The Textual Culture of English Protestant Dissent 1720-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)
- Witherington, Ben, III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998)
- Worrall, David, *Celebrity, Performance, Reception: British Georgian Theatre and Social Assemblage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

Worrall, David, *Radical Culture: Discourse, Resistance and Surveillance 1790-1820* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1992)

Worrall, David, *Theatric Revolution: Drama, Censorship, and Romantic Period Subcultures 1773-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

Wright, Angela, *Gothic Fiction* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007)

Wu, Duncan, ed., *Romanticism: An Anthology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006)

Wykes, David. L., 'Rational Dissent, Unitarianism, and the Closure of the Northampton Academy in 1798', *Journal of Religious History* 41. 1 (2017), 3-21